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THE MINOR PROPHETS

BY

Rev. F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.
Chaplain in ordinary to the Queen and Dean of Canterbury

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY
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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW PROPHECY 1

Prophet or Seer—The origin of the words and the distinctions between them—The word "prophet"—Its modern and its scriptural meaning—Predictions—Old sense of "prophecy"—Prophetic insight—Prophecies dependent on conditions—Jonah and Ezekiel—Micah and Jeremiah—The prophets preachers of righteousness — Prophetic schools — Prophecy not ecstatic — The prophets as statesmen—Their heroic faith—Their spirituality—Their proclamation of righteousness—Their Messianic announcement—Their unwavering hopefulness.

CHAPTER II.

THE WRITINGS OF THE PROPHETS 16

The prophets as authors—Amos—Written and spoken prophecy—Style of the prophets—Their fragmentary preservation—Their subsequent publication—What is meant by "Minor" Prophets—The reformers of Judaism—Use of the Minor Prophets in the New Testament.

CHAPTER III.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE PROPHETS 23

Unchronological order—Three groups of prophets—Their true chronological sequence—Supposed subjective arrangement—A general survey of the epochs of prophecy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROPHETS AS SPIRITUAL TEACHERS 28

Amos as a prophet—Grandeur of his attitude—Existence of the Law—Asserted limitations of the prophets—Anthropomorphism — Particularism — Imperfect knowledge of immortality — They rarely address individuals—Need of a re-statement of the argument from prophecy—Literal and ideal predictions—Irreconcilable elements—The Messianic expectation.

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PAGE

CHAPTER V.

AMOS 35

The heading of Amos—His date—Historic allusions—Reign of Jeroboam II.—Moral corruption and its inevitable doom—Idolatry and disorder—The irony of history—A Southerner—A peasant-prophet—His images from nature—His intellectual eminence—His tremendous rhetoric—His summons to the north—His stern denunciations and threats of doom—Episode of his personal history—His return to Tekoah.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS 49

General subject of his prophecy—Five main sections:—I. The first section: Denunciation of seven nations—Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah—The iniquities of Israel—Her fourfold transgressions—Her base ingratitude—Noble moral indignation. II. The condemnation—1. Significance of his mission—2. The arraignment—*α*. For civil oppression—*β*. For luxury—*γ*. For impenitence. III. The final doom—1. The dirge—2. Renewed accusations—3. Reproof of formalism—4. Fresh menaces—5. The doom once more. IV. Four visions and a history. V. Last warnings—One vision more—Last words of hope.

CHAPTER VII.

HOSEA 59

Traditional heading—Probable dates of his various prophecies—Five divisions—The chronology partly artificial.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA 82

Hosea obscure in outline—His style—His allusions to nature and to history—His *paronomasias*—References to him in the New Testament—His theology—The book of his prophecies—1. Accusations against Israel—2. More special accusations—3. The punishment—4. Retrospect, denunciation, consolation—Wrong lines of interpretation—5. Final retrospect and conclusion—The tone and colour of his prophecies explained by his personal experiences—Autobiography involved in the three first chapters.—The lesson which Hosea had learnt.

CHAPTER IX.

JOEL 103

Joel—Nothing known of him—His name—Widely different conjectures as to his date—Elements of the decision—His style—His eschatology compared with that of other prophets—Indications that he was a post-exile prophet—Allusions to the Captivity—Priestly sympathies—Recapitulation—Origin of the prophecy—Indebtedness to earlier sources.

PAGE

CHAPTER X.

THE BOOK OF JOEL 113

Outline of the prophecy—1. The Day of the Lord and the locust plague—2. Historic notice—3. Consoling promise of the nearer future—4. The blessings of the Church, the judgment of the world. Difficulties of interpretation—Are the locusts literal or allegorical?—Difficulties in either view.

CHAPTER XI.

MICAH 124

Incident related by Jeremiah—It shows us the true nature of Hebrew prophecy—The heading—The name Micah—His birthplace and rank—His denunciations—The menace of Assyria—Style of Micah—Difficulties.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOOK OF MICAH 129

The heading—Abrupt character of the divisions—I. The threat of judgment—Elaborate *paronomasias*—Their significance—II. Guilt and judgment—III. The promise of blessing—IV. The two last chapters—A magnificent colloquy—A high spiritual lesson—The final hope.

CHAPTER XIII.

NAHUM 141

Nahum, his name and birthplace—Unique character of his prophecy—Sketch of the history of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser I., Asshurnazipal, Shalmenezer II., Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Asshurbanipal—Fall of Nineveh—Her cruelty and brutality—Outline of Nahum's prophecy—Its fulfilment.

CHAPTER XIV.

ZEPHANIAH 153

Zephaniah—His date—His style—His object—His characteristics—Diminution of originality—Outline of the Book—The Menace—The Admonition—The Promise—Conclusion

CHAPTER XV.

HABAKKUK 159

The name Habakkuk—Perhaps a Levite—His date—His eminence and originality—His book—The complaint—The oracle—Its deep significance—The Pæan—Legends.

CHAPTER XVI.

OBADIAH 175

Obadiah—What is known of him—His date—His allusions—Relations between Israel and Edom—Analysis and general bearing of the prophecy—The fulfilments.

CHAPTER XVII.

PAGE
HAGGAI 187
Haggai—Beginning of an inferior order of Prophets—The returning exiles—Analysis of the book—Its difficulties.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ZECHARIAH 198
The name Zechariah—Various bearers of the name—Whose son?—Iddo—Time and outline of his prophecy. 1. First address: *Repent.* i. First vision: The angel riders. ii. The four horses and four smiths. iii. The Restoration of Jerusalem. iv. The Priesthood and the Branch. v. The golden candelabrum. vi. The roll and the ephah. vii. The four chariots—Historic appendices: 1. The crowning of the High Priest. 2. The question about fasting.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN ANONYMOUS PROPHET 208
These chapters by an earlier prophet—Decisive proofs of this—Attempts to maintain the unity of the book—How the mistake arose—1. The triumph of Zion—i. The judgment on the heathen—ii. The holy King of Zion—iii. Promises of deliverance—2. Divine exaltation of Ephraim and Judah—3. Apostasy and judgment—Remarkable typology.

CHAPTER XX.

"ZECHARIAH" XII–XIV. 216
A third prophet—Peculiarities of his prophecy—Political circumstances of the time—The attitude of Judah to Jerusalem—I. The great deliverance—i. God's judgments on the heathen—ii. The repentance of Jerusalem—iii. The purification from guilt—II. Judgment and final glory—i. The day of the Lord—ii. Partial deliverance—iii. Judgment on enemies—iv. The Messianic kingdom.

CHAPTER XXI.

MALACHI 223
The name Malachi—Date of the prophet—Condition of contemporary society—Deeply seated evils—Germs of ultimate Judaism—Style of Malachi—Outline of the book—I. Sins of the priests—i. Introductory statement—ii. Ingratitude of the priests—II. Sins of the people—Heathen marriages and divorces—i. Defiance—ii. Warning—iii. Distrust—iv. The day of the Lord.

CHAPTER XXII.

JONAH 231
Peculiarity of the book—Its late origin—Its purpose and lessons—Difficulties—Arguments of those who defend its genuineness—i. Defence of the miraculous—ii. Historical parallels—iii. Reference of our Lord.

CHIEF PROPHECIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS WHICH ARE MESSIANICALLY APPLIED, OR OTHERWISE REFERRED TO IN THE NEW TESTAMENT 244

CHRONOLOGY.

(*From G. Smith's "Assyrian Discoveries."*)

Assyrian Kings.

	B.C.
Tiglath-Pileser I.	1120–1100
Assur-nazir-pal	885–860
Shalmaneser II.	860–825
Tiglath-Pileser II.	745–727
Shalmaneser IV.	727–722
Sargon [1]	722–705
Sennacherib	705–681
Esarhaddon	681–668
Assur-bani-pul	668–626
Bel-zakir-iskun	626–620
Assur-ebil-ili	620–607
Destruction of Nineveh	606

Chaldean Kings.

	B.C.	
Nebuchadnezzar I.	1150	
Nabonassur	747	
[Babylon Destroyed	689]	
Restored by Esarhaddon	681	
Nabopolazzar	626	
Nebuchadnezzar III.	605	(Nabu-kudur-uzur)
Evilmerodach	562	
Neriglissar	560	
Labarosvarkodur ?	556	
Nabonidus	556	
Belshazzar (Bel-sai-uzur) was associated with his father on the throne		
Cyrus conquers Babylon	539	

1 "Sargon asserts that he was preceded by 330 Assyrian kings."—Sayce, "Records of the Past." New Series, ii. 205 (Some of the above dates are given very differently *l. c.*).

BOOKS ON THE PROPHETS.

Besides the monographs to which reference is made under each separate head, there are many Patristic[1] Rabbinic,[2] Scholastic, Reformation,[3] Post-Reformation, and modern commentaries on the "Minor Prophets." It is not here necessary to give a list of these; but the following modern books may be mentioned:

Diestel, "Gesch. d. Alten Testaments," Jena, 1869.
Knobel, "Prophetismus d. Hebräer," 1837.
Hengsterberg, "Christologie des Alt. Test.," Berlin, 2nd ed., 1857.
Tholuck, "Die Propheten u. ihre Weissagungen," Gotha, 1860.
Hofmann, "Weissagung u. Erfüllung," Nördlingen, 1844.
Riehm, "Die Messianische Weissagung," Gotha, 1865.
Stähelin, "Die Messianischen Weissagungen," Berlin, 1847.
Kuenen, "Prophets and Prophecy in Israel," London, 1877, Eng. tr.
Küper, "Das Prophetenthum," Leipzig, 1870.
W. Robertson Smith, "Prophets of Israel," Edinburgh, 1882.
Delitzsch, "Messianic Prophecies," Edinburgh, 1880, Eng. tr.
Reuss, "Les Prophètes," Paris. ("La Bible," 1876.)
Duhm, "Theologie der Propheten," Bonn, 1875.
Rowland Williams, "The Hebrew Prophets," London, 1871.
C. v. Orelli, "Das Buch Ezechiel u. die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten," Nördlingen, 1888.
Ewald, "Die Propheten, Zte Aufl.," Göttingen, 1868.
Hitzig, "Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten," (edited by Prof. Steiner, Leipzig, 1881).
Pusey, "The Minor Prophets," 1860.

For Chronological questions see—

Schrader, "Cuneiform Inscriptions," 2nd ed., Giessen, 1883.
Kamphausen, "Die Chronologie d. Heb. Könige," Bonn, 1883.
Duncker, "Hist. of Antiquity."
"Records of the Past," Bagster, London. New Series, 1889.
"Church Quarterly Review," Jan., 1886.

---

[1] *E.g.*, by Jerome, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Cyril of Alexandria.
[2] *E.g.*, by Rashi; (†1105) Ibn Ezra (†1167); and Kimchi (†1230).
[3] *E.g.*, by Œcolampadius (1555); Calvin (1557).

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW PROPHECY.

"Men divinely taught, and better teaching
In their majestic, unaffected style,
The solid rules of civil government
Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome."
MILTON, "Paradise Regained," iv.

Prophet or Seer—The origin of the words and the distinctions between them—The word "prophet"—Its modern and its Scriptural meaning—Predictions—Old sense of "prophecy"—Prophetic insight—Prophecies dependent on conditions—Jonah and Ezekiel—Micah and Jeremiah—The prophets preachers of righteousness—Prophetic schools—Prophecy not ecstatic—The prophets as statesmen—Their heroic faith—Their spirituality—Their proclamation of righteousness—Their Messianic announcement—Their unwavering hopefulness.

BEFORE we speak of the separate works of the Minor Prophets, it is essential to form a correct and definite conception of the origin of the prophetic body, and of the functions of prophecy in general among the ancient Hebrews.

In every enquiry it is best to begin by ascertaining, as far as possible, the meaning and history of the words employed.

The commonest Hebrew word for prophet is *Nabî* (נָבִיא), which occurs some three hundred times in the Old Testament, and must be regarded as the normal designation in all ages. It is true that from 1 Sam. ix. 9 we might infer, at first sight, that *Nabî* was a later term than *Roeh* (רֹאֶה), seer;[1] but the meaning of that passage must be interpreted by the fact that *Nabî* is found long before Samuel's time,[2] whereas *Roeh* is not. The verse, then, seems to be a later gloss, inserted by the editor of the book to explain the fact that Samuel was chiefly known as a

[1] "He who is now called *Nabî* was beforetime called *Roeh*."
[2] Gen. xx. 7; Num. xii. 6; Judges iv. 4, vi. 8, &c.

Roeh, though that title was afterwards superseded by the term *Nabî*, and became almost obsolete.[1]

Unfortunately, the derivation of *Nabî* is highly uncertain. It does not seem to have been a genuine Hebrew word at all, and was perhaps borrowed from the Canaanites. Gesenius, indeed, derives it from נָבַע, "to bubble up"; and he thus ingeniously connects it with *Nâtaph* (נָטַף), which properly means "*to drop*," but which is used by three prophets to symbolise the utterance of prophecy.[2] Fleischer makes it mean "spokesman."[3] Ewald, too, connects it with an Arabic root meaning "to speak clear"; but perhaps the Arabic may also have borrowed the word from some Canaanite source, or may simply have formed the verb from the Hebrew *Nabî*.[4]

The word *Roeh* indicates that the prophet is one who, like Balaam, "sees in a trance, having his eyes open"; one to whom is granted "the vision and the faculty Divine"; one who has been "illuminated in the eyes of his mind";[5] one who, amid the darkness of the present, sees with spiritual intuition the eternal hopes of the future; one whose spirit is quick-eared to hear God's intimations, and who, being pure in heart, enjoys the beatitude of seeing God.

The word *Chozeh*, "seer," has a similar significance. The verb *chazah*, "to see," cannot be a mere synonym of *raah*, "to see"; but in ordinary usage does not perceptibly differ from the latter verb in sense, though it is more poetical. *Chozeh* occurs twenty-two times in the Old Testament, and is applied to Gad, Heman, Iddo, Hanani, Asaph, Jeduthun, and Amos.[6] It occurs chiefly in the Books of Chronicles. *Roeh*, on the other hand, occurs but ten times, and in seven of these it is used as the designation of Samuel.[7] There can be no great difference

[1] Samuel is himself called a *Nabî* in 1 Sam. iii. 20; 2 Chron. xxxv. 18.

[2] Micah ii. 6, 11, lit. "*Drop* ye not." Ezekiel xxi. 2, "*Drop* Thy word towards the sanctuaries." Amos vii. 16, "*Drop* not Thy word against the house of Israel."

[3] Delitzsch, "Die Genesis" (3rd ed.), p. 634.

[4] Kuenen, "The Prophets of Israel," p. 42, Eng. tr.

[5] Eph. i. 18, πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς διανοίας της ὑμῶν.

[6] Amos vii. 11. The expression "The king's," or "David's" *Chozeh* (2 Sam. xxiv. 11; 1 Chron. xxi. 9, xxv. 5, &c.), does not seem to imply more than a partial and accidental distinction—a distinction of outward office, not of inspired message.

[7] In 2 Sam. xv. 27, Zadok is called "a seer"; but the words may be

between the meanings of the two words, since Hanani, for instance, is called both a *Roeh* and a *Chozeh*. On the other hand, there must apparently have been *some* distinction in the popular mind, for in 1 Chron. xxix. 29 we are told that the acts of David are written in the book of Samuel the *Roeh*, and in the book of Nathan the *Nabî*, and in the book of Gad the *Chozeh*. Both *Roeh* and *Chozeh*, however, mean one who, in the words of Gregory of Nazianzus, is "the initiated observer and interpreter of the great mysteries."[1]

In the Greek versions the word προφήτης, "prophet," is used to render *each* of these three terms. It cannot be accepted as throwing any original light upon the conception of prophecy, for prophecy was an intermittent phenomenon, and this Greek name did not originate until long after the voice of genuine prophecy had fallen silent. It is, however, valuable as expressing the fundamental view of prophetic functions which was prevalent among the learned Jews of Alexandria three centuries before Christ.

A "prophet," in *modern* popular usage, means predominately one who foretells the future—who predicts events which could be only known to him by miraculous revelation. By the "argument from *prophecy*" is usually meant the evidence for the Divine origin of Christianity, derived from the foreknowledge exhibited by the prophets of the Old Testament. But this argument requires a careful restatement if it is to stand the light of modern criticism. The definite announcement of events yet distant is but a small, a subordinate, and an unessential part of the prophet's mission. Elijah was a great prophet, yet he uttered no prediction which did not concern the immediate present; unless his announcements of the drought and of the destiny of Ahab and Jezebel be reckoned as predictions; on the other hand, neither Samuel nor John the Baptist, though among the greatest of the prophets, foretold the distant future. The attempts to declare the issues of the future belonged rather to the priests with their Urim and Thummim, which would not have become obsolescent unless it had fallen into suspicion and contempt. The prophets were no

rendered "*Seest thou?*" and the LXX., following another reading, renders it "*See.*" Wellhausen reads רֹאֵשׁ for רֹאֶה, and renders it "Zadok the *Chief* Priest."

[1] ὁ τῶν μεγάλων ἐπόπτης καὶ ἐξηγήτης μυστηρίων.

mere augurs or monthly prognosticators. The work for which they were called was nobler and more Divine; and when that work was sketched out to them in the hour of their call, the power of definite prediction is not dwelt upon.[1] They were statesmen, they were moral teachers, they were spiritual guides. The connotation which makes the word "prophecy" identical with "prediction" is partly due to a false etymology. Προφήτης is not derived from προφαίνω, "I reveal," but from πρὸ and φημι and the preposition πρὸ in this compound did not *originally* mean "beforehand." A prophet is not so much a "foreteller" as a "forth-teller." The Greek word means one who *interprets* another, and especially one who is an interpreter of God. This is the proper and all but invariable meaning of the word in classic Greek. "Apollo," says Æschylus, "is the *prophet* of Zeus"—in other words, he interprets the decrees of Zeus. Similarly, Euripides calls Orpheus the prophet of Bacchus, and Glaucus the prophet of Nereus; and the Pythian priests and priestesses were called "prophets," because they explained the rapt utterances of the seers (μάντεις), who spoke in ecstasy. So, too, the poets are called interpreters. "Utter thy strains, oh Muse," says Pindar, "and I will be thy prophet."[2]

How completely *this* meaning, and not that of vaticination, is predominant in the Scriptures, is clear from Exodus vii. 1, 2. "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet"—in other words, "thy interpreter"; or (as it is expressed in Exodus iv. 16) "he shall be thy spokesman unto the people, and *he shall be to thee a mouth.*" And God says to Jeremiah (Jer. xv. 19), "Thou shalt be as My mouth." Nor is this point of view superseded even in the Apocrypha and the New Testament. In Gen. xx. 7 Abraham is called "a prophet," though it was not his function to predict, but he was like Noah, "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter ii. 5) and "a friend of God." And though the wisdom which can see the future in the germs of the present is so naturally an endowment of the illuminated soul that definite prediction—almost always of events already upon the horizon—is not *excluded* from the sphere of a prophet's work; yet it is clear,

[1] Isa. vi. 10–13; Jer. i. 17–19, vii. 1–34, &c. It will, of course, be observed that the general denunciations of doom, based on moral laws of retribution, are wholly different from specific predictions.

[2] Pind., Fr. 118, Μαντεύεο Μοῖσα, προφατεύσω δ' ἐγώ.

both from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, that the prophets of the New Testament were, in the main, and some of them exclusively, moral and spiritual teachers.[1] Prophets play a large part in the recently-discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles"; but, though these are mentioned fifteen times, no hint is there given that they ever pretended, or were expected to foretell things to come.

But it may be said, "Is not *the verification of predictions* made the actual test of a prophet's mission in Deut. xviii. 9–22?" I answer—not in the sense required by those who regard prediction as the essential of a prophet's mission. I will not here dwell on the growing belief that the Book of Deuteronomy is, to a large extent, a work much later than the days of Moses, but I will merely observe that two *criteria* are furnished to the people. Of these the first is exclusively moral. If the prophet incites to idolatry he is to be stoned, *even if his predictions are fulfilled.* The second test expressly implies that he will speak of things already on the horizon, and such as may enable his message to be tested in his own lifetime, and at no distant interval. And plainly in this passage the point in view is the verification by experience of moral or spiritual exhortations, or the occurrence of promised signs (Deut. xiii. 1, 2), while a marked distinction is made between "prophets" and "soothsayers." God, as Amos says (iii. 7), "reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets"; but that "secret counsel" is the moral interpretation of God's method of exalting and punishing men and nations, not a revelation of times and seasons and events, which an eternal law, except on the rarest occasions, beneficently shrouds in the midnight of uncertainty.

Even in English the word "prophet" had once a wider sense than in its modern and popular acceptance. The meetings of the clergy, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, were called *prophesyings*,[2] though they were only ordinary religious exercises which Bacon describes as consisting of Scripture exposition and prayer.[3] When Jeremy Taylor gave to his famous book the title "The Liberty of Prophesying," he merely meant thereby

[1] Besides Agabus, who did foretell events which were already close at hand (Acts xi. 28 : xxi. 10, 11), Barnabas, Simeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, and Saul are called prophets (xiii. 1–4), and the daughters of Philip prophetesses (xxi. 9).

[2] Hallam, "Const. Hist." i. ch. 4. [3] "Pacification of the Church."

"the freedom of preaching." And in point of fact the Hebrew prophets were like an order of independent clergy side by side with, and most frequently in deadly antagonism against, the priestly caste, and the conventional multitude of their own professional brethren.[1]

But though prediction is not necessarily involved either in the Hebrew, the Greek, or the English names for "prophet," it is constantly implied that the prophet, by virtue of his more general insight and inspiration, could sometimes foretell events which were as yet unobserved by the eyes of the multitude;[2] and in one or two instances false prophets are even challenged to produce any fulfilled prediction as the credential of their authority.[3] Yet it needs but to take in hand the entire writings of the prophets to see that anything resembling that sort of *minute and detailed description of future events*, of which the Book of Daniel would be a specimen, if Daniel were its author, is conspicuous by its absence. The traditional notions about prophecy drop to pieces when the extant writings of the Hebrew prophets are approached historically, instead of being read in a fragmentary, conventional, and *a priori* manner. The "burdens" or "oracles" of the prophets on heathen nations, and their denunciations of their own countrymen are based on the unchangeable verities of the Divine government. They were always fulfilled in the spirit, and, in the general idea, because they were founded on moral certainties; but in the letter, and in minor details, they are not insisted on.

Further, nothing is more clear than the fact, that in most instances the prophets themselves, even when they make no verbal reservation, did not regard these denunciations as absolute, but as conditional; not as exceptionless, but as partial; not as supernaturally predictive, but as the illustration of eternal principles which God had specially brought home to them. Their menace always implied an "*unless*." This is most

[1] Dr. Payne Smith, in his "Bampton Lectures," regards the ordinary *nebiim* and "sons of the prophets" as corresponding to our "ministry"; but he elevates the greater and more isolated prophets to a wholly different position. Yet the Scripture history shows clearly that they were only differentiated from the "false" prophets and the common herd of prophets by their power and faithfulness, *not* by their position.

[2] Deut. xviii. 22; Jer. xxviii. 9. [3] Isa. xliii. 9; xliv. 7, 25-28, &c.

forcibly illustrated by the Book of Jonah. His message was plain and unlimited, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Yet he had all along felt a misgiving that God's mercy would avert the threatened doom. Forty days elapsed, and Nineveh was *not* destroyed. Was Jonah, then, by the criterion of Deuteronomy (xviii. 22) a false prophet? No! In almost every prophetic message there was the *subauditur* that the consequences might be averted if the causes were cut off. Similarly Ezekiel prophesied, in B.C. 586, that the nations led by Nebuchadnezzar which were advancing against Tyre, should sweep away her dust, and reduce her to a bare rock (Ezek. xxvi. 14), and that she should not again be built, "for the Lord hath spoken it" (vers. 11–14); and he says no word about mitigation or delay. Yet, though Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for thirteen years, there is no proof at all, either from Scripture or from the monuments, that he captured it. That he in no sense made it a desolation is certain, for we know that for centuries afterwards it continued to be a noble and wealthy city. Nay, more, perhaps sixteen years later Ezekiel seems to correct his own prophecy in a postscript, added when the book was edited (xxix. 17–21), in which it seems to be implied that the siege of Tyre had practically failed, and that God had given Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar instead of Tyre. Was Ezekiel, then, a false prophet? No! But the prophets were set to deal with general principles and broad issues, not, as a rule, with the minutiæ of detailed vaticination.[1]

Another very striking proof of the principle here inculcated—a principle which has been, by most writers, and until recent times, entirely overlooked—is furnished to us by the remarkable trial recorded for us by Jeremiah.[2] Infuriated by his prophecy of the utter destruction of the Temple, the princes arrested him, and, combining with the priests and prophets—for isolation and unpopularity were the all but invariable consequences then as now, of a prophet's faithfulness—they denounced him to all the people as worthy of a traitor's death, because he had uttered such stern and ill-omened words. Jeremiah tells them that they can slay him if they will, but they will only bring innocent blood upon the city and upon themselves. The princes and the people admitted his plea; but, as a matter of course, the priests and prophets remained implacable

[1] See Kuenen, *l.c.*, pp. 106–111. [2] Jer. xxvi. 1–24.

because no hatred is so bitter as that of the professors of a false orthodoxy against one of their own body who dares to speak the truth. He found powerful protectors in Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and certain of the elders. They deplored, as a crime, the murder of Urijah by Jehoiakim, and they appealed to the precedent set by good King Hezekiah in the case of Micah. Micah had prophesied that Zion would become heaps, and the Temple hill a waste.[1] He had delivered this message in the most unreserved and emphatic manner as the direct message of Jehovah, and he had not given any hint that the judgment would be averted. Yet it had been absolutely averted, and the city was still standing a century later. He had meant, and had been universally understood to mean, that the doom would fall *at once*. Was he, then, a false prophet? By no means. Hezekiah had repented, and the menace in consequence fell naturally to the ground. "The Lord repented Him of the evil which He had pronounced against them."[2] Indeed, Jeremiah himself lays down this general principle in the broadest manner: "If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."[3]

In general, then, it is of the deepest importance, for any genuine comprehension of the prophets in their real grandeur, to see that they were preachers of righteousness, statesmen and patriots, enlightened to teach to an ever-apostatizing nation—

> "What makes a nation great, and keeps it so,
> What ruins kingdoms, and lays cities flat."

They were "messengers of Jehovah" (Hag. i. 13), "men of God" (1 Sam. ii. 27), "men of the Spirit" (Hos. ix. 7). They uttered "the word of Jehovah," "what Jehovah saith." In all their deepest announcements they could say, with an almost oppressive consciousness of responsibility, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me." There was a sense in which "all the Lord's people were prophets," as Moses had desired that they should be, when Joshua, with affectionate jealousy, would fain have checked the voices of Eldad and Medad. The greatest prophets looked forward to a time when, as Joel prophesied, Jehovah would "pour out His Spirit upon all flesh"; and when, in the aspiration of Jeremiah, "They

[1] Mic. iii. 12. [2] Jer. xxvi. 19. [3] Jer. xviii. 8.

shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know Me from the least to the greatest." But until that day should come the prophets rightly felt themselves to be the special and divinely appointed warners and teachers of their people. They echoed in more articulate voices the rolling thunders of Sinai. 'I am full of power," says Micah, "even the spirit of Jehovah, of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."[1] And naturally these voices were most often the voices of lamentation, mourning, and woe. Falling on evil times, their commonest prophecies were threats of war, calamity, and pestilence. So rarely did they say, "Peace, peace," that, in the words of Jeremiah, the test of a prophet who did so could only be the actual fulfilment of his words.[2]

Had prediction been the main note of a prophet, there would have been an absurdity in the notion that they could be *trained* to read the secrets of the future, which God's mercy and providence has shrouded in darkness. Such training could only have assumed the form of mechanical superstition as empty as that which made it strange, as Cicero says, that two augurs should meet without laughing in each other's face. Yet even as early as the days of Samuel we find the prophets living together at places like Naioth, Gilgal, Ramah, and Bethel, in cœnobitic communities.[3] They live and move about in bands. Speaking and dancing to the shrill strains of music, they are sometimes swayed by a contagious excitement, which recalls the foaming lip and the streaming hair of the Greek μάντις,[4] or the wild gestures and deathful collapse of the Mohammedan dervishes. These movements of uncontrollable fanaticism among the youths trained in the schools of the prophets, may have been stimulated by the circumstances of their nation, and specially, in the first instance, by the indignant patriotism which was called into life by the oppression of the Philistines and other surrounding tribes. The greatest prophets did not rise, however, from these colleges, and even held aloof from them. Elijah belonged to no school of the prophets; and though Samuel and Elisha seem partly to have lived with such schools, Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, Jehu ben Hanani, and others, were as

[1] Mic. iii. 8. [2] Jer. xxviii. 9. [3] 1 Sam. x. 5; xix. 20.
[4] Derived by Plato from μαίνομαι, "I am mad."

independent of them as Amos and the majority of the prophets whose writings are found in our Sacred Canon.

But though outward signs of passionate emotion accompanied the impulse of the prophetic spirit, the notion introduced into theology by Philo—that the prophets naturally delivered everything in a condition of ecstasy and trance—must be abandoned as unscriptural and false.[1] Two reasons may have helped the acceptance of this delusion—one that the hurried and impetuous action of the prophets sometimes left an impression of madness;[2] the other that there were false prophets as well as true, and these prophets, misled by greed and self-deception, and even falling under the influence of spirits which were not the Spirit of the Lord, may have simulated the frenzy of inspiration as they borrowed the hairy garment and leathern girdle, which became the outward signs of a prophet from the days of Elijah downwards.[3] But so far as all the great prophets are concerned, and all whose written words have been preserved, we see that there was no spell upon them which absorbed or annihilated their human individuality. On the contrary, all that they say is said in the most careful, and often in an elaborately artistic form. Their poems are as different as possible from the wild, rude utterances of half-frenzied persons. They are written in elaborate parallelisms, in careful strophe and antistrophe, and even in some instances in an alliterative form. Philo borrowed his theory, not from Scripture, but exclusively from Plato, and it has been fruitful of error and superstition. The Hebrew prophets were as unlike as possible to the Phrygian Montanists, or to those Christian brawlers who gave themselves up to the maddening enthusiasm of glossolaly. Elisha expressly sent for a minstrel to calm and control the tumult of his spirit.[4] The spirits of the prophets, as St. Paul says, "are subject to the prophets."[5] The Divine does not supersede the human, but dilates and elevates it. Inspiration is neither infallibility, nor verbal dictation, nor abnormal miracle, nor—to quote the favourite metaphor of Montanus—the playing of the Spirit upon the harp of man's being as upon a passive instrument:

[1] Philo, "Quis rer. div. haer." 52. "De Proem. et poen," 9. See Siegfried, "Philo," p. 322. Comp. Josephus, "Antiq.," iv. 6, § 5.

[2] 2 Kings ix. 11; Hos. ix. 7; John ix. 20; Acts xxvi. 24; 1 Cor. xiv. 23.

[3] Zech. xiii. 4. [4] 2 Kings iii. 15. [5] 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

it is the inmost harmony of the spirit of man with the Spirit of God within the sphere of human limitations.[1]

As statesmen, the prophets were intensely practical, admitting no distinction between the laws of national and individual morality, recognizing in the law of righteousness the one basis of all political truth. As patriots, they sympathized with the wretched multitude. Though sometimes of royal birth, like Isaiah, and sometimes members of priestly families, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, they pleaded against oppression, robbery, and wrong, braving the anger of corrupted multitudes, reproving the crimes of guilty kings. They sometimes acted as tribunes of the people. Like Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, they boldly rebuked the vices of their sovereigns, and their courage in fulfilling this high task was all the greater because they were not protected by the sacrosanct inviolability which hedged round the tribunes of Rome. But the prophet was no demagogue, even when, like Amos, he sprang from the humblest of the people. He had to alienate the blind multitude, while he confronted the iniquity of their rulers. He denounced in burning words the luxury and tyranny of the rich, but was no less strenuous in his warring against the vices, follies, and passions of the poor.

Three characteristics mark the efforts and position of the Hebrew prophets.

I. First, we must place the heroic faith which looks beyond the little grandeurs and transitory aims of the average man. Most men shrink from braving danger, exposing falsehood, fighting against wrong. They swim with the stream. They spread their sails to the veering wind. They look on success as the end of living, and on popularity as the test of truth. Not so the prophets. Their vision pierced beyond the vain shows and passing pageantry of life. In Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Rome, they only saw in outline dim and vast

> "The giant forms of empires on their way
> To ruin."

Kings, priests, mobs, were but weak men; that which was

[1] Tertullian ("C. Marc." iv. 22) protests against the views of Montanus, and Miltiades wrote a book—no longer extant—*περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν προφήτην ἐν ἐκστάσει λαλεῖν.* Comp., too, Chrys. "Hom. in Cor. xxix."

arrogantly paraded as the majesty of public opinion meant to them but the shout of the noisiest and the vote of the most ignorant; they believed that "one with God is always in a majority"; they "swallowed formulæ"; they flung to the winds the false types of goodness, and the false types of orthodoxy which satisfied the somnolent average of religious teachers in their day; they would not deceive for reward or promotion; they would not lie for God. One form of summons might have served to describe their common call and lifelong martyrdom: "Gird thy loins and arise, and speak unto them . . . be not dismayed at their faces . . . behold I have made thee a fenced city, an iron pillar, and brazen wall against the whole land—against the kings, against the princes, against the priests, against the people. . . . And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord."

II. Secondly, the prophets are the most conspicuous teachers of spiritual religion.[1] In the happy phrase of Professor Kuenen "Ethical Monotheism" is the main, as it is the inestimably precious, contribution of the Hebrew prophets to the spiritual advance and eternal elevation of the race. The priests, absorbed in visible functions, were liable to a twofold danger; on the one hand, they might easily fail to distinguish between the high essential service due to God, and the ritual functions which were equally acceptable to Baal; on the other, they might sink, as in age after age they have sunk, into the subtler idolatry of formalism. They failed to apprehend that the one end and aim of religion is righteousness; that a religion consisting exclusively of ceremonies, a religion divorced from morality, is no religion at all. It is the protest against this idolatry of the outward function which marks the theology of the prophets. "*Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams*," said Samuel. "*I despise your feast days, and will not smell in your solemn assemblies*," was the message of the Lord by Amos. "*I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of the Lord more than burnt-offerings*," said Hosea, in words which our Lord loved to quote. "*What doth the Lord require of thee*," asks Micah," "*but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy*

[1] Deut. xviii. 9–18.

God?" "*Bring no more vain oblations,*" says Isaiah; "*but wash you—make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes.*" "*The just,*" says Habakkuk, in words which were the keynote of the theology of St. Paul, "*shall live by faith.*" Thus did the prophets, one after another, make light of the pompous religionism of offerings and ceremonial, and anticipate the teaching of the Son of God: "*Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.*"

III. If the prophets had delivered no other message than this—that righteousness is the test of sincerity—they would have done a mighty work. And in this sense Israel became a prophetic nation, for its sole significance in history is that it upheld to the ancient world the banner of righteousness. But a third and most precious characteristic of the mission of the prophets is the steady, inextinguishable spirit of hope which animated them amid the direst catastrophes of their people, and which gleams out amid their stormiest predictions of retribution and woe. Even in abasement their horizon is always luminous with the certainty of victory. As each of them could personally say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord—I will joy in the God of my salvation;" so they could always point to the bow of mercy amid the wildest storm of ruin. And this hope spreads outward in ever-widening circles. Even when the prophecies of Israel's destruction seem to be most sweeping, it is always intimated that Israel shall not utterly be destroyed. The conviction of the prophet is that evinced by Isaiah when he called one of his sons Shear-Jashub—a remnant shall be left. And the hope for all Israel becomes more and more clearly a hope for all mankind. The ultimate and most decisive declaration of Hebrew prophecy is, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." God was, for them, always in the meridian; a Sun that knew no setting. Trust in Him involved a universality of Promise for the whole race of which He is the Father in Heaven. Grander, more Divine than any mere congruities of dates and details, was

the faith which believed that there was all the certainty of a law in the ultimate triumph of goodness and of truth.

IV. And this hope, which sometimes seems to fill their pages with Divine contradictions, centres more and more brightly, more and more definitely, in a Divine person, an Anointed Deliverer, a coming Saviour for all mankind. And thus prophecy is the pervading and central element of the whole sacred canon. "As we watch the weaving of the web of Hebrew life, we endeavour to trace through it the more conspicuous threads. Long time the eye follows the crimson ; it disappears at length ; but the golden thread of sacred prophecy stretches to the end." So true is the great saying of the Apostle, that "*the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*." The Messianic hope, and the trust in God by which it was inspired and continued, is the richest legacy of the prophets to all after ages. They point us to a Priest upon His throne, to a Man as a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And in the certain advent of that Divine Redeemer—beyond the sins and confusions of Israel, beyond the anarchy and moral chaos of the world—they saw, as it were, the body of heaven in its clearness, the vision of the Perfect Man, the vision of the Perfect God.

"Heralds of inexorable judgment based on demands of absolute righteousness"—they were at the same time forerunners of the Gospel, and thus they were enabled to accept, as a dim, unexplained postulate of faith, the very restoration which at times their own words seem absolutely to exclude.

Thus it is as true of Israel as of us, that "they were saved by hope." And it is deeply instructive, if also deeply painful to observe, that in the decadence of the nation this hope dies away, and dies away in exact proportion to the growth of priestly formalism : until at last in the hour when outward scrupulosity and pompous ritual and burdensome letter-worship reached its zenith in the exaltation of the Pharisees, in that same hour priests and Pharisees killed the Lord of Glory, and Scribes were not wanting who were content to recognize the promised Messiah in an Idumæan alien, a corrupt and blood-stained despot, like Herod the Great. The star of Messianic hope was kindled when man lost Paradise; it burned brightly in Moses ; waxing and waning, it once more shed unwonted lustre over the aspirations of the Psalmists ; in Isaiah it

reached its fullest and most unclouded splendour; it shone less brightly in Ezekiel and his post-exilic successors; in the interspace between the two dispensations it waned into the blurred and twinkling glow of a vague, national abstraction, until at last it hardly existed except in the breast of the Prophet of the Wilderness; and after becoming for ages little more than a formula among the Jews of the dispersion, it is now avowedly set aside by many Rabbis as a metaphor or a delusion. It was reserved for Christian insight to see that the whole life of Israel is in some sense a Messianic prophecy; that their Law was, as Tertullian says, *gravida Christi;* and that of Christ even when they knew it not, all the prophets spoke.

As the prophecy of that Deliverer belonged to the inmost essence of Judaism, so the history of His great, eternal, continuous redemption is the inmost essence of the faith. The prophets all looked forward to Him with glorious yearning; the Apostles rejoice in the plenitude of His promised presence with peace and love; the Christian world looks back to His earthly ministry, and upwards to His Divine exaltation. And thus the whole structure of the Church of God is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.

CHAPTER II.

THE WRITINGS OF THE PROPHETS.

"Ventiquattro seniori, a due a due,
Coronati venian di fiordaliso."
DANTE, "Purg." xxix. 83.

The prophets as authors—Amos—Written and spoken prophecy—Style of the prophets—Their fragmentary preservation—Their subsequent publication—What is meant by "Minor" Prophets—The reformers of Judaism—Use of the Minor Prophets in the New Testament.

So far we have considered the general characteristics of Hebrew prophecy, and endeavoured to clear away some of the one-sided conceptions which obscure the true view of the work of the prophets. We will now consider the writings of these great teachers as they are preserved for us in the sacred page.

The functions of the prophets as *authors* were secondary, and rose from later circumstances. Originally and primarily the prophet was an orator, a preacher to the people. The mighty agency for good exercised by such leaders of men as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, was carried out exclusively by the living Voice. They spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. His influence was strong within them; while they were musing the fire burned, and at last they spake with their tongue. But as the times altered and life became more complex the prophet was compelled to write, and perpetuate his messages, and so to put them beyond the power of intriguing priests or hostile kings to suppress.[1] It was thus that Jeremiah gave permanence to the orations which the impotent wrath of Jehoiachim endeavoured to destroy.[2] Finally, the impassioned rhetoric of the preacher was merged into the finished periods of the author, and, in the latest books of the Canon, prophecy takes the form of literature.

[1] Isa. viii. 1–16, xxx. 8; Jer. xxxvi. 11–32. [2] Jer. xxxvi. 32.

The process began with Amos, if, as seems probable, he was the earliest of those whose prophecies are extant. His harangues and denunciations were delivered in the northern kingdom, but his book in its present form was committed to writing, arranged, and thrown into artistic shape when he had been driven back to his own home in the peaceful pastures of Tekoah. We can see from the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that, in the final edition of their prophetic utterances, the order of time in which their messages were delivered was subordinated to other considerations. In Ezekiel, too, and the post-exilic prophets, there was far less of the fervour of inspiration, and the torrent of public speech. They assume to a greater extent the aspect of artificial poetry or of symmetrical prose.

Naturally, however, the written prophecy would shew traces of its oral origin. The character of all Eastern oratory is rhythmic; the eloquence of an Oriental always has some tinge of poetry in it. The writings of the prophets are therefore sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse, but often in an intermediate style, partaking of both elements. "This," says Ewald, "is confirmed by the most cursory observation. The prophet's written discourse is as animated and rapid, as telling for the moment, as discursive and resumptive, as full of surprises and effective appeals, as his oral discourse. And as the prophets when they appeared in public addressed primarily the assembled men, but might at times direct a word, at the end or at a convenient pause, to women standing in the distance, so in their writings also occur such brief appeals to the women at the end of a longer section."[1] Posterity gained in every way from the literary record which, while it preserved the substance of "thoughts that breathed and words that burned," added to these the mature results of reflection, the corrections of history, the ripe fruits of later experience, and here and there the invaluable fragments of biographical detail which give us a helpful insight into the prophet's mind, and better enable us to understand his words and mission. The editing of the messages which constituted his life's work was generally carried out a considerable time after they were first delivered.

But by the days of Amos written prophecy had become a necessity both for the national life and the means of revelation.

[1] Ewald, "Prophets of Israel" i. 62, E. T. (Amos iv. 1–3; Isa. iii. 16, iv. 1, xxxii. 9; Ezek. xiii. 17–23).

The present was becoming more and more hopeless, so that men needed to be sustained by hopes of the future; and Israel and Judah were both to be scattered among heathen nations.

The writings of the earlier and greater prophets, even when they do not soar into absolute poetry, have in them a vivid imagery, a majestic elevation, a rhythmic beat and movement which distinguish them from the *pedestris oratio* of the ordinary moralist. Like the Latin *vates* and the British *bard*, the prophets were almost invariably to some extent poets also. They constantly adopt that form of parallelism which has been described as "the rhyming of the *sense*." The prophetic writings fall into strophes, arranged generally in twos, threes, or fives, and often marked by the emphatic and musical *refrain* of some striking sentence. They often rise from strophe to strophe into terrible and splendid climax; often, too, a magnificent effect is produced by a colloquy between two interlocutors and by grand dramatic personifications. And prophetic literature—as in Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and others—does not disdain to use the *paronomasiæ* or effective plays on words which are common in the writings of all nations, and which, in the minor form of alliteration, constitute, not unfrequently, the basis of national poetic form.

These separate poems or orations are sometimes described as "a word of the Lord"; sometimes as "a vision" (חָזוֹן, *chazôn*); sometimes as a "burden" or oracle (מַשָּׂא, *massâ*) which was often addressed to foreign nations.

When we find a prophet, like Zephaniah or Obadiah, represented only by a short single poem, we must not necessarily suppose that so brief an utterance was the sole outcome of his life's work. When prophecy became literature it ran the risk of all the chances to which the preservation of literature is subject. Some poets—like Persius and Gray—live by small but precious books; others, like the author of the "Burial of Sir John Moore," are famous for a short single poem. We must remember that in the Bible we have only the fragments of a much more extensive literature; the remains of a much vaster library. It is hardly probable that a prophet would have been like the English senator who was known by a single speech; but the *preservation* of his messages was due in part to "God's unseen Providence, by men nicknamed Chance," and in part to the intrinsic value, force, and

originality of what he said, upon which depended the impression which it made upon the minds of those to whom it was addressed. After the Exile these books were edited by Ezra and Nehemiah, and their colleagues of the so-called Great Synagogue. Length, no doubt, tended to a writer's preservation. The writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—for few now doubt that Daniel belongs to a much later date, and falls under an entirely different category—formed a compact and important whole. It was not likely that such writings would perish, except in some general catastrophe. But in addition to these great books there were many others, of which it is probable that some were in a fragmentary condition and of forgotten authorship. Guided by evidence external, internal, and linguistic, modern criticism thinks that it can point out—and in some instances has succeeded in proving—that the remains of some Great Unknown have become accidentally incorporated with the works of some other prophet. In an age devoid of criticism — which in its perfection and in many of its methods is an entirely modern science — it was in accordance with probability that such mistakes might occur; and all the more because the rarity and preciousness of vellum and other writing materials made it necessary to save every inch of space. Similar confusions have happened again and again many centuries later, and in times much more favourable to the preservation of writings. Thus various sermons and writings of Pelagius were long printed among the works of his enemy, St. Jerome. The commentaries of an unknown writer, generally called Ambrosiaster, were printed with those of St. Ambrose; and it is well known that misnamed letters and orations have found their way into the works of St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, and St. Augustine. And, not to mention other modern instances, the Tartarean sermon of the Spanish Jesuit Nieremberg, has been mistaken for the work of Bishop Jeremy Taylor. Now nothing is more certain than that the letter of Scripture was not preserved by miracle from error or interpolation; and that the canon of Scripture was left to the judgment, wisdom, and learning of the Jewish Church, guided generally by the Spirit of God, but with no exemption from the possibility of error. This is proved both by historic variations and by the fact that different branches of the Catholic Church have to this day a different canon as well as different texts. It

is obvious, then, that every question of unity of authorship must not be regarded as a *religious* question, but must be approached historically, with patient observation, with a supreme sense of the sacredness of truth, and with a mind free from the bias of purely traditional opinions. The possibility of minor confusions was enhanced by the fact that the prophets used, quoted, and were influenced by, each other's writings. The Book of Ezekiel, apart from a corrupt and difficult text, has probably come to us much as he left it; and although the variations of the Septuagint show that the Book of Jeremiah has been freely handled, there can be little doubt that his prophecies also have been preserved substantially in their original form.[1] In the Book of Isaiah, on the other hand, it is now generally admitted that there are mingled elements. The last chapters may be said with something like certainty to be the work of an anonymous prophet of consummate gifts, who lived towards the close of the Babylonish Captivity. In the historical books we are expressly referred to treatises of various prophets—Gad, Iddo, and others—which have not come down to us. If these seers wrote history it is natural to suppose that they may also have written prophecies. But their writings have perished. Indeed, many phenomena lead us to the belief that "there is at the back of the existing remains an extensive literature of which there have been preserved to us but, as it were, a few blossoms from a large tree."[2] We must not therefore be surprised if we are confronted by questions of unity of authorship, and transpositions of text, when we come to the writings of some of the prophets. The formation of the prophetic canon resembled in some respects the formation of the Psalter, and was liable to the same disturbing elements.

The Twelve Minor Prophets were thrown together into one volume because their collected remains were about equal in size to the books of the Greater Prophets. When materials were costly—and it must be remembered that the use of papyrus was not common before B.C. 333[3]—it obviously saved expense, and waste of space, to copy the smaller authors upon a single roll.

[1] It must of course be borne in mind that in editing their prophecies the prophets must have indefinitely abbreviated their oral discourses.

[2] Ewald, *l.c.* 86.

[3] Pliny, "H. N." xiii. 21 (corrected by Wilkinson, "Anc. Eg." iii. 148).

The name *Minor* Prophets, and the German *Kleine Propheten*, "*little prophets*," has proved to be very misleading. Thomas Paine is by no means the only person who has supposed that they were so called because of their inferior importance. They owe the name solely to their smaller size, and the book which contained them was known in Greek as τὸ δωδεκαπρόφητον, or "twelve-prophet-book." Whether this title of "Minor," or the difficulty of understanding some of these writings, has led to their comparative neglect cannot be decided; but certain it is that no part of Scripture has been so little studied or is at this moment so little known. I shall esteem it a great reward of my labour if these pages have the effect of making these precious and interesting remains more generally understood.

We may be better prepared to estimate their value when we remember two facts about them.

1. The writings of the Hebrew prophets are the crown and flower of the Old Testament writings. They are also the most unique representations of Hebrew nationality and thought. Other nations have had their poets and historians; but no nation has produced a set of writers so morally eminent and politically beneficent as the Greater Prophets. They stand forth as the Protestants and Reformers of Judaism, repudiating the mechanical formalism of an external cult, and usually in marked antagonism to the whole priestly order. The deepest of the many misfortunes which attended the development of Judaism was the extravagant exaltation of a deathful and evanescent Law over the spirituality of those who were the precursors of the Gospel.

2. The Apostles evidently attached a high value to the Minor Prophets. In the New Testament they are more frequently quoted than the Greater Prophets (by which we merely mean Larger Prophets). "The text of the first Christian sermon," says Dean Payne Smith, "is taken by St. Peter from Joel (Acts ii. 17–21). St. Stephen gives emphasis to his argument by a quotation from Amos (Acts vii. 42, 43); and St. James, by a quotation from the same prophet, decides the question discussed at the first Christian Council (Acts xv. 16, 17). So, too, if we look at the doctrines first revealed by their instrumentality, we shall find that they hold a very foremost place in our belief. It is Joel who teaches us the momentous fact of a future resurrec-

tion and a general judgment, and of that outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, without which these doctrines would be a terror to us. It is Micah who reveals to men the birthplace of our Lord, Zechariah foreshadows His crucifixion, Jonah His resurrection though veiled under a sign. And as they were the earliest prophets who left written memorials of their work, so were they the last. The Old Testament closes with the trumpet-sounds of Malachi, telling us of the approach of the Forerunner, of the separation of the Jews into those who accepted Christ and those who rejected Him, and of the coming of days when, from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, no victim should bleed upon an altar, but the meat-offering, the type of Christian worship, be offered every day to Jehovah's name."[1]

[1] See the table of references to the Minor Prophets in the New Testament at the end of the book.

CHAPTER III.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE PROPHETS.

"Distingue tempora et concordabis Scripturas."
ST. AUGUSTINE.

Unchronological order—Three groups of prophets—Their true chronological sequence—Supposed subjective arrangement—A general survey of the epochs of prophecy.

THE Bible would be far better understood in its historical aspect if it were arranged with greater reference to chronology. As it is, the Books of the Prophets, like the Epistles of the New Testament, are heterogeneously flung together with reference only to their length and size. This is, of course, a purely accidental principle of arrangement; yet many uninstructed readers never get below it. They look on Isaiah as the earliest of the prophets, though he had at least six predecessors.[1]

The reader will obtain a clearer view of these writers if he will remember that—I. Chronologically the prophets whose books have survived fall into three great groups: (1) those of the Assyrian period; (2) those of the Chaldean period; and (3) those who succeeded the Exile.

(1) To the first group belong Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and the earlier Isaiah. The date of Joel is uncertain. Historically Jonah, the son of Amittai, was older than any of these, but modern criticism may be said to have abandoned the notion that the book which passes under his name was written by that ancient prophet. The first group of prophets wrote from the time that Assyria began to emerge upon the horizon till the overthrow of its power by Babylon. What is

[1] The Hebrew order of these Prophets is Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, &c. The Greek order is Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, &c.

their exact order cannot be determined, but it may perhaps correspond to that in which they are here placed. When their remains were edited after the Exile it is probable that these six Minor Prophets already formed one volume, Hosea, Amos, and Micah may have been placed first only because they occupy the greatest space. It is probable that some at least of the headings of their writings were added by later hands.

(2) To the second or Babylonian period belong Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, and Obadiah. The historic work attributed to Daniel was not placed by the Jews among the Prophets at all, but among the Hagiographa or sacred writings.

(3) To the post-Exilic prophets belong Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

II. As the chronological order is so important, we might perhaps prefer Kuenen's separation of the Prophets generally into *five* groups.

1. B.C. 900–850. Præ-Assyrian period—Amos, Hosea, Joel (?).

2. B.C. 850–700. The Assyrian period—Micah, Isaiah.

3. B.C. 626–586. The Chaldean period—Nahum, Zephaniah,[1] Jeremiah, Habakkuk, the elder Zechariah, Obadiah.

4. B.C. 586–536. The Exile—Ezekiel.

5. B.C. 520–400. The post-Exilic Prophets—Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi.[2]

The Books of Jonah and Daniel belong to an entirely separate order. If the prevalent views of modern research be correct, the first is a magnificent specimen of moral allegory devoted to the noblest purposes; and the second is the earliest of a long series of *apocalypses* from the days of Antiochus Epiphanes (B.C. 175) down to the Sibylline books, the Shepherd of Hermas, and not a few Christian writings of the first and second centuries after Christ. In days of persecution, when any literature which was not cryptographic might involve whole communities in peril, religious teaching strove to sustain the endurance and fire the courage of men and women, by representing to them across the wilderness, in a mirage which was undeceptive, the hopes and triumphs of the days to come.

III. Keil has supposed that subjective principles were at

[1] Nahum and Zephaniah stand at the close of the Assyrian epoch, before Nineveh was destroyed.

[2] The existing Book of Zechariah possibly contains three separate fragments of different dates.

work in the order of the Minor Prophets. Hosea in his last chapter had spoken of rich harvests; Joel was therefore placed next to him because he makes the failure of the harvest a call to repentance. Amos was placed after Joel because he repeats the metaphor of the Lord roaring out of Zion which is found in Joel's last chapter. Amos had spoken of Israel possessing the remnant of Edom, and he is therefore succeeded by Obadiah, who prophesies the ruin of Edom. Since Obadiah had spoken of "an ambassador among the heathen," Jonah follows Obadiah. Micah and Nahum follow because they speak of Nineveh, and because they illustrate the mercy and long-suffering of God.[1]

It will be seen, then, that the entire order of prophets from first to last falls into very various groups, if we give to the designation the latitude which it gradually received.

i. First come the Patriarchs, whose prophetic gift consisted in moral elevation, trust in God, and communion with God by dreams and epiphanies in which they were made repositories of precious promises.

ii. Next comes Moses, the inspired guide of the New Nationality, the deliverer of the Moral Law.

iii. Samuel inaugurates a new epoch. The wild orgiastic impulses of spirits stirred to their depths by the emotions of outraged patriotism, and the consciousness of Divine insight, as well as the lower tendencies towards a vulgar vaticination, were corrected by the formation of Schools of the Prophets, in which youths were trained to take part in great national movements, and to keep the people in the paths of faithful monotheism and obedience to the moral law so far as it was then understood.[2]

iv. In Elijah, Elisha, and their followers, the prophet—often standing in magnificent isolation in which he had to confront the opposition of priests and the apostasy of kings—assumed the position of an immediate representative of Jehovah, armed with supernatural powers to punish those who resisted the truths which he proclaimed.

v. The prophets of the Præ-Assyrian period were poets, orators, and tribunes of the people, resting their claims exclusively on the authority of their divine message. During this

[1] Jonah iv. 2; Micah vii. 18; Nahum i. 3, referring to Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

[2] David and some of the Psalmists must be regarded mainly as poets, yet they also belong in part to this division of prophets.

epoch, as Delitzsch says, World-Empires and Prophetism were the two main factors in redemptive history, and the prophets were like the embodied conscience of the state.

vi. In the Chaldean epoch the chief Prophet Jeremiah was no longer able to fire into heroism the resistance of a free people. He had to check and discourage efforts on all of which was written the epitaph "too late," and to preach a faithful and penitent submission rather than a patriotism which had been doomed to final overthrow. It was the function of Jeremiah—who stood almost alone—first to be a preacher of the new reformation of the days of Josiah, and then to expose its elements of failure and hollowness. "As Elijah represents the conflict, and Elisha the triumph of prophetism, so Isaiah represents the power of the prophets in action, and Jeremiah their strength in suffering. He is the afflicted priestly prophet, as David is the suffering king."

vii. In the Exile the prophets, as represented by Ezekiel, became more symbolic, more literary, and more sacerdotal.

viii. These tendencies were perpetuated in the later and feebler prophets, who encouraged the returning exiles to rebuild the Temple or to support its services.

ix. In the period after Malachi the voice of genuine prophecy ceased altogether. It was replaced by later and inferior forms of sacred literature. God spoke no longer by dreams, by Urim, or by prophets, and the passion of inspiration sank into yearning memories, vague and unhopeful aspirations, or prudential morality. A burst of feeling was awakened by the struggle against Antiochus Epiphanes, but it chiefly expressed itself in apocalypses, historic narrative, and didactic fiction. The wisdom-literature—known by the Jews as the *Chokmah*—produced fine fruit in the Books of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom; the apocalyptic literature (if modern views be correct) in the Books of Baruch and Esdras, and in certain chapters of the Book of Daniel, which was, as Delitzsch says, "a book of consolation for the confessors and martyrs of the times of the Seleucidæ"[1] The literature of moral apologue—if again modern critics be right—was enriched with one consummate work in the Book of Jonah.

[1] He adds that weighty reasons point to the date of the Book of Daniel as about B.C. 170, so that it is one of the latest books of the Old Testament.

x. Prophecy of the olden type which took Elijah as its model was revived in the great Forerunner, but with three characteristic differences. John did no miracle; his teaching was distinctively moral; and it was his chief mission to be a herald of the Coming King.

xi. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST was in the highest and completest sense the Prophet (Deut. xviii. 18) as well as the Priest and King of the whole human race, in that He interpreted to them in human speech the Eternal Will of God.

xii. The prophets of the Christian Church were distinctively moral teachers and preachers; and their function, under the promised aid of the Holy Spirit of God has been continued unbroken to the present day.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROPHETS AS SPIRITUAL TEACHERS.

Amos as a prophet—Grandeur of his attitude—Existence of the Law—Asserted limitations of the prophets—Anthropomorphism—Particularism—Imperfect knowledge of immortality—They rarely address individuals—Need of a re-statement of the argument from prophecy—Literal and ideal predictions—Irreconcilable elements—The Messianic expectation.

I HAVE already said that in reading the Prophecy of Amos we are probably reading the earliest *written* product of Hebrew prophecy.

Moses indeed was a prophet, but his work as a legislator was more prominent, and the title prophet only belongs to him in the same general sense in which (as we have already seen) it is applied to Abraham and the Patriarchs. Samuel was a prophet, and one of the utmost eminence, but the writings which emanated from his immediate school seem to have been mainly historical. Elijah, Elisha, and their predecessors, Gad, Nathan, Ahijah, Shemaiah, Iddo, Azariah, Oded, Hanani, Jehu, Jahaziel, Eliezer, and other prophets and seers who are unnamed in the earlier days of the monarchy, confined their work to the oral delivery of their Divine commission, or to the composition of royal chronicles. Amos, then, marks the first step of the transition from oral to written communications of the Word of the Eternal.

If we suppose that the Pentateuch was in existence when the prophets wrote, we shall follow the usual custom of making the word "Law" in their pages always refer to the Law as we find it in the five books of Moses. But nothing is more certain than that to the mass of the people many of the Mosaic regulations were as completely unknown as if they had never existed. That some parts of the Sinaitic Law are of extreme antiquity, and that the people were not unacquainted

with the requirements of the moral law as represented by the Ten Commandments, seems certain. But when the earlier prophets speak of "the Law" there is no proof that they are referring to written documents. Such documents would have been useless to an illiterate people, absorbed in perpetual wars. Jeremiah seems to be the first prophet who refers to a *written* code, which some have identified with the Book of Deuteronomy. We cannot say with any certainty what older documents had in any way influenced the general religion of the people under their earlier kings. The prophets thus become the earliest as well as the most eminent of the great moral teachers of the Jews.

But even if it be supposed that the Pentateuch was in the hands of Amos and Hosea and Isaiah, how completely do they rise above the spirit of Levitism, which, at the best —as the New Testament teaches us—had been concessive, imperfect, transient, and formalistic. Prophet after prophet uses language which sounds almost sweeping and disdainful in its depreciation of the outward ceremonies on which, to the narrower minds of the priests, the very safety of the world was supposed to depend.[1] Such language is usually explained to mean that sacrifices and incense, and bowing the head like a bulrush, and scrupulosity about fasts and feasts, was not for a moment *to be put into comparison with moral rectitude* and the sincere religion of the heart. In the terms they use, however, the prophets themselves make no such reservation. In some passages they seem to denounce the conceptions which lie at the base of the Levitic and Pharisaic spirit as in themselves despicable, because they evince ignoble thoughts of God, and of the true service of man. At any rate they make it as plain as does the New Testament, that except as subordinate adjuncts to religious worship—except as cheap things by which God cannot be pleased in themselves but only when they subserve to higher ends—they only kindle the displeasure of God.[2]

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 22; Psa. xl. 6; Amos v. 21–27; Hos. vi. 6, viii: 13, ix. 3–6; Isa. i. 11, xxix. 13, lxvi. 3; Jer. vi.; Mic. vi. 6, 7.

[2] Hos. vi. 6; Jer. vi. 20, vii. 21–28. "It might be thought that such declarations were intended only against the vice and superstition of that false service which finds it easier to sacrifice than to obey, and thereby to correct the undue preference which men of their own will might give to the ceremonial law. But the prophets do more than this; they insist on the

It may, however, be objected to the grandeur of their teaching (1) that their idea of God is too anthropomorphic; (2) that their view of His relation to mankind is too exclusive; (3) and that they fail to explain the enigmas of Providence, because they do not vividly realize the life beyond the grave.

1. As to the first point, any abstract conception of God as a Being without Body, Parts, or Passions, is of necessity a growth of ages. To the ancients, in the immature childhood of the world, such a Deity was unthinkable. It continued to be so for many later ages. Even Tertullian regards the notion of a bodiless Divinity as self-refuting and absurd. Origen had indeed fully realized the meaning of the words, "God is Spirit," but he was so completely in advance of his age that the rude anthropomorphite monks of the Scetic desert were driven into a fury of turbulence by his teaching; and one old hermit, on being shown the absurdity of his views, burst into tears and exclaimed that the Origenists had robbed him of God, of the only God whom he knew. Even in these days it is impossible to speak of God's dealings without translating the abstract into the language of human metaphor. However clear may be our imagination of the Eternal, all language respectin Him becomes meaningless and ineffectual without the aid of anthropomorphism and anthropopathy, that is, without the symbolical attribution to Him of such expressions as "the hand" and "the eye" and "the heart" of God, and without supposing Him to be capable of conditions dimly analogous to anger and scorn and hatred, as well as mercy and beneficence. Whatever imperfections we may find in the revelations of the prophets are implied in the saying of our Lord: "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." The prophets lived in the dawn and childhood of revelation, not under its noonday splendour, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

2. As for the particularism which we find in the Prophets, it is only such as we find in all nations at a certain stage of their development. It is exactly analogous to the feeling which

eal inferiority of the ritual worship; they mark the essential difference which the several parts of His law had in the sight of God" (Davison, n "Prophecy," p. 284).

made the Greeks divide the human race into Greeks and barbarians, and the Chinese into celestials and terrene.

It was impossible that an ancient Jew should have been cosmopolitan in spirit, when such a feeling as the universal brotherhood of man—a feeling first made into a common heritage of thought by the Gospel—was as yet unknown in any land. And the particularism of the Jew was, in certain aspects, a part of his divine training. It was cherished by the deep and true sense that God had given him a unique position among the races of men, and a special duty towards them. Friendly intercourse with the worshippers of Baalim and Ashtaroth and Moloch and Chemosh meant certain demoralization, and apostasy from the pure worship of Jehovah. Further, let us bear in mind that the state of the world in the eighth century before Christ was immensely different from that produced by the sum of so many fair centuries, in which mankind has learnt the traditions of civility and righteousness. Amos and Isaiah and Micah lived in an epoch when there flamed or smouldered between the nations the concentrated malignity of immemorial blood feuds and the loathing of religious hatreds. War between such nations meant exile, slavery, extermination, the ripping up of women, the cruel mutilations of men, the dashing of mothers and infants down the rocks. In such a condition of society—amid the cruel imminence of kidnapping, slave raids, and horrible invasions—it was not unnatural that the comity of nations should be a thing unknown.

And yet the prophets even in this matter often seem far above the standard of their age.

In the prophetic writings, more than in any others of the Old Testament, we find occasional glimpses—if no more—of the great truth of God's common Fatherhood, which it was left for Christ to reveal, and which St. Peter and St. Paul enunciated in such noble words to the Gentiles under the roof of the centurion at Cæsarea, and to the Stoics and Epicureans in the Areopagus at Athens.

"God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and doeth righteousness is accepted of Him."

"Verily I perceive of a truth that God hath made out of one all nations of men . . . if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us . . . as certain of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"

3. And it is true that it was Christ and not the prophets who brought life and immortality to light. It implies limitation, but not defect in the prophetic teaching, that they only conjectured *Sheol* as a world of spirits—vague, dim, and shadowy as the Hades of the Greeks—and that the idea of *future* rewards and punishments does not definitely enter into their religion, and is not made the motive of their moral exhortations. Whatever may be the wise and merciful reason for this law of Providence, certain it is that truth has never been vouchsafed to mankind in one broad flood of noonday light. Rather it has always begun as a beam in the darkness, broadening more and more to the boundless day. The teaching of the prophets is true and sublime within its own range of inspiration; but it is of the dawn, not of the noonday.

As part of this limitation it is important to observe that the Prophet very rarely addresses individuals. The sort of religious self-absorption—the selfishness expanded to infinitude—the concentrated egotism of personal effort to escape future punishment—the contented hugging of our own particular plank of safety amid the universal welter of the fiery surge; these elements of our modern individualism, which have often usurped well nigh the whole sphere of religion, were unknown to the ancient prophets. Their message is addressed almost exclusively to communities and kingdoms. The citizen is lost in the conception of the State. Even the blessings pronounced on the "remnant that shall be left" are mainly the blessings of the commonwealth, not of the individual.

They teach us that God will smite, will smite justly, and yet will spare; that He will destroy, yet not destroy wholly or finally, because He is God and not man, and because, as Clement of Alexandria says, "were He to cease to do good, He would cease to be God." "I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger; I will not return to destroy Israel, FOR I AM GOD AND NOT MAN." That was a real, and not a sham message. It was an anticipation of the revelation of God by the Son of God as the Father of the prodigal. These words, "*for I am God, and not man,*" might stand for an epitome of Holy Writ. They indicate—

> "An unchanging love
> Higher than the height above,
> Deeper than the depth beneath,
> True and faithful, strong as death."

In the teaching of the prophets, as in that of Christ and His Apostles, the awful certainty of retribution does not obliterate the unquenchable gleams of love and hope. The prophets would have said, with George Fox, "I saw an ocean of death and darkness, but an infinite ocean of love and light flowed over it, and in that I saw the infinite love of God."

In accordance with these high convictions was that unalterable recurrence of the Messianic faith which lay at the heart of all that was best in the religion of the Hebrews, and which stamps with the divinest sanction the truth of those oracles of God which were entrusted to the charge of God's people Israel. "By virtue of their connection with the community of Israel," says Ewald, "and the eternal truth with which it has supplied them, the prophets had inherited the main elements of eternal hope and firm confidence in the end of all things. Where the eternal truths have once been so firmly grasped, and made the basis of the entire national life as was the case in the ancient community of Israel, the conviction must prevail that they can never be wholly lost, but must in the end issue in still greater well-being. The imagination inspired by zeal and longing desire is able to pursue at length the hopes which thus arise, and may elaborate them with equal vividness and truth. The Messianic hopes were formed under the influence of the never-resting burning desire, and the struggles of imagination of these prophets. But the present is often very far from the attainment of the consummation; indeed, the way towards it appears at times either lost in darkness or cut off. Here, therefore, the prophetic function is properly called into play; and according as a prophet, in the midst of the darkness of the present and immediate future, points out the way to that eternal hope and consummation, is his magnitude and truth to be measured."[1]

Much of the language in which the Messianic belief is expressed is necessarily symbolic, and events are foreshortened to the prophets' yearning gaze. "The prophets," says Crusius, "beheld the future, by means of the light of Divine illumination, as we do the sidereal heavens. To us the stars appear as if they were on one level; we do not distinguish their distance from us and from one another."[2]

[1] Ewald, i. 36.

[2] "Proph. Theol.," p. 99. Comp. Bengel on Matt. xxiv. 29. Delitzsch, "Old Testament History of Redemption," p. 148, Eng. tr.

But the most important general fact to bear in mind with reference to the predictive element of prophecy is that it must be understood in a large ideal sense. The prophetic picture is to be judged, not so much by the figures in which it is expressed, and the details which heighten its effectiveness, as "by the meaning of the thoughts and demands which is hidden within it. It would be a source of constant misconception to conceive of picture and presentiment otherwise than in accordance with their own peculiar life and nature." "Prophecy," says Delitzsch, "was not only Divine, but human. Both the expansion of the prophet's vision which is wrought by the Holy Spirit, as well as the natural limitation of his vision which the Spirit does not remove, serve the Divine plan of redemption; for if prophecy had possessed and afforded a definite chronological knowledge concerning the course of the future, it would have cut off all desire to press toward the goal of the offered prize." [1]

It is towards the close of the history of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms that "Messianic prophecy breaks through the night and fire of judgment more intensely and brightly than ever. Now for the first time the Messianic idea is decisively separated from the present. The image of the Messiah is painted upon the pure ether of the future. It becomes the treasure of a faith which doubts the present, and therefore has become so much the more spiritual and heavenly."

[1] "Old Testament History of Redemption," p. 150.

CHAPTER V.

AMOS.

The heading of Amos—His date—Historic allusions—Reign of Jeroboam II.—Moral corruption and its inevitable doom—Idolatry and disorder—The irony of history—A Southerner—A peasant-prophet—His images from nature—His intellectual eminence—His tremendous rhetoric—His summons to the north—His stern denunciations and threats of doom—Episode of his personal history—His return to Tekoah.

IN the uncertainty which hangs over the date of Joel, we place Amos first in order of the Twelve Prophets. The heading of his Book tells us that he "spoke as Seer[1] concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel two years before the earthquake."

This was probably added by the hand of later editors. Amos is here called "a seer," but he tells us in vii. 14, that he was neither a prophet (*nabî*) nor a prophet's son. Yet if the heading did not come from the prophet himself, it is evidently based on well-authorized tradition.

Uzziah reigned, according to the Hebrew chronology, from B.C. 810–758.

Jeroboam II. was king of Israel, according to the same system, from B.C. 825–773.[2] The two kings were contemporary during the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam. But this chronology, which has been proved to be constructed on general and artificial principles as regards its details, must be corrected by the data furnished by the Assyrian monuments. The subject is very perplexing, but recent researches seem to show that

[1] Lit. "Saw," חזה

[2] The dates are uncertain. Sharpe places the death of Jeroboam II. in 764, Brander some years later.

the nearer dates for Uzziah's reign are B.C. 772–735; and for Jeroboam II. from 786–746.[1]

The phrase, "two years before the earthquake," gives us no more precise date. We know that the earthquake happened in the reign of Uzziah, and that it was so memorable as to form an epoch. For Zechariah, writing long afterwards, still appeals to the terror it created as to a vivid memory, and says, "Ye shall flee like as ye fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah."[2] Earthquakes are by no means unknown in Palestine, but they are sufficiently rare to produce a tremendous impression. But though this earthquake was long remembered, its date is nowhere recorded. It was probably the severest which happened within the period of Jewish history, unless we except that mentioned by Josephus a little time before the birth of Christ, in which he says that "some ten thousand were buried under the ruined houses."[3] Of the earthquake in Uzziah's day Josephus says that it took place at the moment when the king was smitten with leprosy; that the Temple was rent; and that the western half of the hill at Eroge was broken off, and rolled half a mile to the mountain eastward, and there stayed, blocking up the ways and the king's gardens.[4] There is nothing historical in this romance. Josephus probably borrowed it from one of the Rabbinic legends of the Hagadah, and introduced it for the delectation and amusement of his Greek and Roman readers.

Nor, unfortunately, is there any other allusion in Amos which enables us to fix his date with any greater precision.[5] In vi. 2, he bids them that are at ease in Zion and trust in the mountain of Samaria, to go eastwards to CALNEH, and northwards to HAMATH THE GREAT, and westwards to GATH, and observe

[1] Schrader ("Cuneiform Inscriptions"), prefers for Uzziah the date 791–740, and for Jeroboam 790–749. The dates given by Wellhausen, Kamphausen ("Die Chronologie, d. Hebr.," König, 1883); Duncker ("Hist. of Ant.," Eng. tr.) differ from those of Ussher and from each other.

[2] Zech. xiv. 5. The impressions left by the earthquake seem to be traceable in Amos iii. 14; iv. 11; viii. 8.

[3] Josephus, "Ant." xiv. 5, § 2. [4] Josephus, "Ant." ix. 10.

[5] There were two eclipses of the sun visible in Palestine during the age of Amos. Of these one took place (according to Hind's calculation) on June 15, 763; the other on February 9, 784. But although they cannot fail to have produced a powerful effect on the superstition of an ignorant people, the allusions to them in the Prophets are of the most general nature.

that they were not to be compared to Israel and Judah. Yet—such seems to be the implied appeal—these nationalities, though less guilty than the House of Jacob, had fallen under the hands of their enemies. We learn from the history that the pride of Gath had been abased by Uzziah, who brake down its wall,[1] and inflicted on it a humiliation which—since it is not subsequently mentioned with the other four cities of the Philistian Pentapolis by Amos (i. 7, 8), Zephaniah (ii. 4), or Zechariah (ix. 5)—seems to have been final and overwhelming. Hamath the Great, originally made vassal by David,[2] and taken by Solomon, had recently been added by Jeroboam II. to the domain of Israel.[3] Calneh, more famous under its later name of Ktesiphon, lay far away on the Tigris, some forty miles from Babylon, and appears to have fallen, as it also did at a later epoch, under the power of the Assyrians.[4] But the dates of these events are not known with sufficient accuracy to give us a fixed *point de repère*.

All that is perfectly clear is that Amos delivered his main prophecy at Bethel during the most flourishing epoch of the reign of Jeroboam II. The victories of that brave and powerful prince—the fourth of the House of Jehu, which was destined to perish with his son Zachariah—had flung a gleam of delusive prosperity over the imminent doom of Israel. By that irony of history which is so often observable in the fortunes of nations, the Northern Kingdom never seemed to be so strong as in the days when it was within sixty years of its fall and ruin.

Jehu, whose savage massacres had founded the house and awakened the displeasure of heaven, had in 842 become more or less a vassal of Assyria. At any rate he was forced to give presents to the king (Shalmaneser II.).[5] Jehoahaz (c. 815), seems to have been left unmolested; though he or his son paid tribute to Rammannirari. Thus early had "the Romans of the East," as the Assyrians have been called, made their power felt in "the land of the House of Omri," as they designate Israel. Joash (c. 801), the son of Jehoahaz, won three great victories over the Syrians, and inflicted on the insolent aggression of Amaziah, king of Judah, that terrible humiliation to which

[1] 2 Chron. xxvi. 6.
[2] 2 Sam. viii. 9, 10.
[3] 2 Chron. viii. 3, 4; 2 Kings xiv. 28.
[4] In B.C. 739, it was conquered by Tiglath-Pileser; Isa. x. 9.
[5] So we learn from the Black Obelisk in the British Museum.

Amos (ix. 11) seems to allude when he speaks of the "breaches and ruins of the booth of David that is fallen." Jeroboam II., the great-grandson of Jehu, raised Israel to the zenith of its power and splendour. The predominance of the Northern Kingdom was extended over the whole range of the ancient domains of Solomon. Northward it extended not only to Damascus, which was taken by Jeroboam, but even to the far-off Hamath, on the Orontes.[1] Southward it reached to the Wady of the Arabah, the torrent of willows, which divided Moab from Edom.[2] Moab had fallen under his sway. Moab had acknowledged the suzerainty of Israel in former times, and had paid heavy tribute of sheep and lambs; but it had revolted and regained its independence after the death of Ahab.[3] It was now re-subdued, as had been prophesied by some unnamed prophet—not improbably Jonah, son of Amittai[4]—in a prophecy preserved both by Isaiah and Jeremiah. This passage described the devastation of Kir of Moab, the wild wailing of the women huddled together at the fords of Arnon, and the ruin of cornfields and vineyards by the heathen, perhaps by hordes of Bedouin Arabs, whose alliance Jeroboam may have secured.[5]

Jonah had been a prophet in the earlier days of Jeroboam, perhaps before success had ended in corruption. But by the time of the manhood of Amos it was too evident to the illuminated eye of prophetic intuition that wealth had led to vice, and that vice was the prelude to decay and destruction. He could not therefore be deceived by the ease and peace and glory which lulled the contemporary priests and prophets into a sense of security. He held fast to the eternal law that sin is weakness, and that doom dogs the heels of crime. He saw a complication of disorders which were enhanced rather than compensated by the semblance of prosperity. He saw on every side habitual drunkenness, disgraceful self-indulgence, the callous selfishness of ease, murder, oppression, robbery, total forgetfulness of God's essential requirements, a fatal contentment in outward

[1] Amos vi. 14. [2] Isa. xv. 7; Amos, *l. c.* [3] 2 Kings iii. 4, 5.

[4] As Hitzig conjectures. Modern critics venture to regard Isa. xv. xvi. as a prophecy of Jonah. Renan describes it as a "un long hurlement de rage contre Moab, entremêlé de jeux de mots sanglants, et de lugubres plaisanteries" ("Hist. du Peuple d'Israel," ii. 417).

[5] Isa. xvi. 6–14; Jer. xlviii. 1–47.

ritual. Debtors were pitilessly sold as slaves, the clothes of the poor were taken in pledge. The violation of the second commandment by mean and unauthorized symbols of Jehovah—the adoration of cherubim which the prophets contemptuously described as calf-worship—still triumphed after it had lasted for a century and a half at Dan and Bethel. Nor had the House of Jehu succeeded in extirpating the darker and more polluted worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, so that a temple to the Queen of Heaven still stood at Samaria.[1] The priests, like Eli's sons, turned robbers and spoiled the bands of pilgrims on their way to the sacred places.[2] Gilgal was a scene of heathen abomination.[3] The dark groves of the local sanctuaries in the High Places, were, as in all ages, *obumbratrices scelerum*.

Amos would have been no true prophet if he had not clearly seen that because right was right, and because God was God, such a state of things could not last. How often has the state of affairs in guilty nations resembled that in the days of Amos! Persia had never seemed to occupy a more sovereign position than when, in B.C. 388, her king, Artaxerxes II., commandingly dictated the Peace of Antalcidas: yet this was within sixty years of the day when she fell before the arms of Macedon. When Papal Rome seemed to have the world at her feet, and priests stood at the altar of St. Peter's raking into their coffers the uncounted gold of the pilgrims who flocked to the great Jubilee of 1300, Pope Boniface VIII. was within three years of the day when he received at Anagni that cruel blow upon the cheek from which it may be said that the dignity of the Papacy has never wholly recovered. In 1587 Philip II. seemed the undisputed autocrat of two hemispheres, and the New World was pouring into his treasuries its rivers of gold; yet the next year the defeat of his Invincible Armada by the audacious caravels of England began the dissolution which made Spain go to pieces like one of her own unwieldy galleons in a stormy sea. In 1667 Louis XIV. seemed to be the one *Grand Monarque* of the world, and burnt the bills for his palace at Versailles lest their immense amounts should witness fatally to his pomp and extravagance; but in the days of his successor, when men famished at the very gates of that gilded palace, the *Ancien Régime* received its death-blow, and

[1] 2 Kings xiii. 6. [2] Hos. v. 1, vi. 8, 9.
[3] Amos iv. 4; Hos. iv. 15, ix. 15.

the fearful outburst of the Revolution hurled the grandson of his successor upon the guillotine. Had there been prophets in the days of Artaxerxes II. and Boniface VIII. and Philip II. and Louis XIV., they would have spoken to guilty kings and luxurious courtiers in such words as Amos addressed to the most powerful monarch of the House of Jehu.

It was the sense that all Divine and human laws were being violated with insolence and impunity which flashed its electric thrill into his heart, and sent him from his peaceful flocks to warn ancient nations and reprove mighty kings. He was but a peasant. He was no prophet or prophet's son. He had not been trained in theological schools like those of Samuel and Elisha. He was a herdsman who fed his flocks in Tekoah, six miles south of Bethlehem, and about twelve miles from Jerusalem.[1] He belonged, therefore, to the Southern Kingdom, but when amid those rugged hills his heart burned hot within him, he felt that the distinction between the two kingdoms ought to be no barrier against the promulgation of the truths which God bade him utter. Indeed, he still regarded the two kingdoms as being ideally and properly *one*, and prophesied that their unity should be hereafter restored.[2]

I have called him a peasant-prophet, and it is probable that he worked for hire, tending flocks which were not his own. It is true that the word נֹקֵד (*nokēd*), by which he is called (i. 1), is applied also to Mesha, the great sheep-master, the Sheykh of Moab, and might imply the proprietor of large cattle-runs on the pastures.[3] But Amos seems to disclaim all rank; in vii. 14 he calls himself by another name for herdsman (*bokēr*), and adds that he was also (as the A. V. renders it) "a gatherer of sycomore fruit." If this rendering were correct it would imply that the position of Amos was exceptionally humble; for the fruit of the wild fig is almost worthless. It is barely edible, and is only eaten by the poorest of the people.[4] But the phrase should rather be rendered as in the R. V., "*a dresser of sycomore trees.*" The

[1] Robinson, "Bib. Res.," i. 486. "The wilds of Tekoah" (2 Chron. xx. 20; 1 Macc. ix. 33).

[2] Amos ix. 11–15; comp. Hos. iii. 5.

[3] Prof. Gandell (in the "Speakers' Commentary") says that the keeper of a particular breed of sheep or goats with soft wool or hair is still called by the Arabs *nakkâd*.

[4] Thomson, "The Land and the Book," p. 23.

Hebrew word "dresser" is represented in the Septuagint by κνίζων, and in the Vulgate by *vellicans* ("nipper" or "pincher"). The sycomore fruit can only be ripened by puncturing it,[1] and to do this was the humble task of Amos. Nothing is said of the oil for which, as the Talmud tells us, Tekoah was famed beyond any other district in Palestine.[2] To tend alien flocks on those dry and sandy uplands, and to look after the sycomore trees which produced a scanty revenue, seems to have been the first task of this great and early prophet of the judgments of God.

And just as we trace again and again in the Psalms of David his youthful familiarity with the sights and sounds of nature during his life as a shepherd-boy on the hills of Bethlehem, so do we trace it in the pages of this peasant-prophet whose lot was cast in the same region. No other prophet furnishes us with these metaphors from scenes of nature in such fresh, vivid, and rich variety. In him we read of the iron sledges of the thresher ;[3] of stormy hurricanes ;[4] of the cedars and oaks with their deep roots ;[5] of the hungry lion roaring in the forest ;[6] of the snared bird ;[7] of the shepherd tearing out of the mouth of the lion two legs and the piece of an ear ;[8] of hooks and fishers' netting ;[9] of the rain within three months of the harvest ;[10] of partial showers ;[11] of mildew, and yellow blight ;[12] of hills and wind and sunrise[13] of Pleiades and Orion ;[14] of mourning husbandmen ;[15] of dangers from bears and serpents ;[16] of locusts, and the king's mowings and the after-growth ;[17] of baskets of summer fruit ;[18] of earthquakes and eclipses, and corn sifted in a sieve, and refuse wheat, and mended booths, and the sower, and the ploughman, and the reaper, and the treader of the vintage.[19]

"It is natural," says St. Jerome, "that all who exercise an art should speak in the terms of that art, and that each should bring similitudes from that wherein he hath spent his life. . . . Amos the prophet, who was a shepherd among shepherds, and that not in cultivated places and among vineyards

[1] Theophrastus, "H. Plant," iv. 2. Pliny, "H. N.," xiii. 14.

[2] "The whole country is now deserted except by the Arabs, who pasture their flocks on those barren hills" (Thomson, p. 606).

[3] i. 3. [4] i. 4. [5] ii. 9. [6] iii. 4. [7] iii. 5.
[8] iii. 12. [9] iv. 2. [10] iv. 7. [11] iv. 7. [12] iv. 9.
[13] iv. 13. [14] v. 8. [15] v. 16. [16] v. 19. [17] vii. 1.
[18] viii. 1. [19] viii. 9 ; ix. 9, 14.

and woods and green meadows, but in the wide waste of the desert, where were witnessed the fierceness of lions and the destruction of cattle, used the language of his pursuits and called the awful and terrible voice of the Lord the roaring of lions, and compared the overthrow of the cities of Israel to the lonely places of shepherds, or the drought of mountains."

St. Jerome, who was a little too much given to sweeping generalizations, applies to Amos the words of St. Paul, "Rude in speech but not in knowledge."[1] Rude in knowledge he certainly was not. The difference of cultivation between man and man in those days when books were few was far less marked than in these days in which many run to and fro and knowledge is increased. The distinction in those days between the learned and the unlearned was the distinction between the gifted and the ungifted. Of anything which we call learning there was little or none. There could not be when there was no such thing as a library, and when books were exceedingly few. However obscure the lot, however limited the circumstances of Amos, there is not a trace in his book of any want of culture and refinement. Five words spelt in an unusual manner are the only sign of provincialism, and it is probable that these only represent the softer pronunciation of Southern Judah. As for general knowledge Amos seems to have been thoroughly acquainted with every form of national culture and poetic expression which existed in his own day. The splendour and intensity of rhetoric in which he is surpassed by Isaiah alone must have come in part from the natural gift with which God had endowed him for the high purpose of his life; but it must have been enhanced by sedulous cultivation. The poor herdsman and tree-dresser writes with all the power and finish of a born poet and a born orator.

We shall better estimate this fine and vivid force when we consider the actual strophes of the prophet's message. Meanwhile we may instance, in passing, the tremendous rhetoric of such passages as—

"The Lord shall roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem, and the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn, the top of Carmel shall wither" (i. 2).

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth, *therefore* I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (iii. 2).

[1] Imperitus sermone sed non scientia.

"Therefore *thus* will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do *this* unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (iv. 12). Here it will be observed that by a terrible *aposiopesis* the *thus* and *this* are left undefined. Israel is threatened with a shapeless dread.

Again, could any poet have used a more overwhelming and startling metaphor than—

"Thus saith the Lord: *As the shepherd teareth out of the mouth of the lion two legs and the piece of an ear*, so shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch and on the damask of a bed."

And the reader will find passages no less forcible again and again, full of concise energy and striking refrains.

It is the lot of some men to emerge for a single day or a single hour in their lives into the full light of history, while all the rest of their lives lies in the deepest shadow. For a moment we know them, and then they disappear. Amos is one of these. We possess the little roll of his prophecy, and we know but one incident in his career. That incident is told in seven verses of the seventh chapter (vii. 10–17).

From the general tenor of the Book we learn, in accordance with this incident, that Amos belonged to the kingdom of Judah. The attempt of the Jews to identify him with Amoz, the father of Isaiah, is an absurdity, founded only on one of their many *a priori* hypotheses. Not only are the two names Amoz and Amos entirely different,[1] but the rank and position of Isaiah and his family—a family partly priestly and partly perhaps royal—differ entirely from those of the herdsman of Tekoah. But what his Book reveals about him, and what is confirmed by the one brief autobiographic notice, is this. Judah was by no means free from transgression, which called for God's judgments; yet the state of Judah was not nearly so deplorable as that of her more powerful and splendid neighbour. Amos did not look only at the external. There was no glamour for him in the military glory and luxurious wealth which might have awaked the confidence and admiration of a less righteous and more superficial observer. He was so much shocked by the moral condition of Israel, and the crimes which ran riot in her pros-

[1] עָמוֹס perhaps "burden-bearer"; אָמוּץ "vigorous." Rabbinic tradition groundlessly calls Amos a brother of King Uzziah

perity, that he could not resist the passionate prophetic impulse which drove him from the pastures of Tekoah to the precincts of the northern capital. While he was following the ewes great with young ones, God filled his heart with the indignation of an outraged moral sense, and in a series of vivid images he asks whether an irresistible cause must not produce an inevitable effect? "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (iii. 3–8).

In his simplicity, therefore, conscious of the awful message which he had to deliver, he shouldered his staff, and made his way direct to Samaria and Bethel. It was no distant journey. It is but twelve miles from Jerusalem to Bethel. So small is the extent of Palestine that I have ridden in a single day from Jerusalem to the top of Gerizim, bad and hilly as the roads are. But the sedentary and stationary character of Eastern life makes any journey seem a most important matter, and a change of residence is a great event. Nothing but the strongest impelling cause would have induced a peasant of Judah to go and testify to the cities of Israel. To do so required a greater courage than for a Jewish prophet to preach against the sins of the people of Nineveh.[1]

Life in the East is very simple, and is sustained at a very small cost. Amos could easily procure the scanty necessaries of his humble livelihood, but in other respects the sacrifice involved in abandoning his quiet uplands and grazing flocks for the feverish and guilty atmosphere of cities must have been a heavy trial to him. And whichever way he turned, his spirit must have been deeply stirred within him as he saw the Northern Kingdom wholly given up to idolatry and corruption. It is to Israel all but exclusively that his message was addressed. To Judah and Zion and Beer-sheba he alludes but incidentally,[2] but he speaks again and again to Israel, Samaria, Bethel, the House of Israel, the Virgin of Israel, the sanctuaries of Israel, Jacob, the House of Jacob, the House of Joseph, the remnant of Joseph, the afflictions of Joseph.[3] The direct call to him was, "Go prophesy to My people Israel." The fact proves that the century-long reprieve of Judah was due to her less-developed wickedness. But Israel had filled to the full

[1] Renan, "Hist. du Peuple d'Israel," 45.
[2] iii. 1; vi. 1; v. 5.
[3] See Pusey, p. 150.

the cup of her iniquity. Amos saw around him the worst signs of a national decadence. He saw the insolence of the rich and the oppression of the poor. He saw extortion, greed, bribery, perverted justice, iniquitous bargains, tampering with the price of corn, hard usury, ruthless severity to debtors, false balances, false weights. He saw callous luxury, shameless debauchery, drunken revelries. The corruption had spread to the princes and to the women. The poor were starving in sullen misery among—

"Men full of meat whom most God's heart abhors."

The rich and the ruling lolled on couches inlaid with ivory and covered with the rich tapestry from the looms of Damascus, while their unheeded brethren craved even for handfuls of corn. Stung to wrath by pity Amos came forth and made the land ring with his assertion of God's equal Fatherhood and eternal righteousness. Such a state of things could not last. Oppression and robbery may be backed by forces seemingly irresistible, but they are of their own nature foredoomed to destruction. Just as the English poet represents the Druid consoling the British warrior-queen with the certainty that—

"Rome shall perish: write that word
On the blood that she hath spilt;
Perish, hopeless and abhorred,
Deep in ruin as in guilt!"

so Amos declares, as he watches the wrongs of the "sons and daughters of misery, and the multitude ready to perish," that Israel cannot survive. It is evident that his prophecies produced a profound impression, which at last culminated in the alarmed interference of the leading authorities. In the seventh chapter he represents God as having designed to send a plague of locusts; but after they had eaten the aftermath of the king's mowings He had withdrawn the peril at the prophet's intercession. Again, there was the threat of some symbolic conflagration so intense that it should even burn up the sea. This, too, was withdrawn at the prophet's prayer. But, after that, he saw the Lord standing on a well-built city-wall with a plumbline in His hand. It was but that line of emptiness, that plummet of destruction, which was afterwards to be stretched over Judah

also,[1] and God would not any longer be interceded with, not pass by any more the transgressions of Israel. "And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the House of Jeroboam with the sword."

So startling a prophecy, delivered by the prophet of a rival kingdom against the whole nation and its royal house, could not be passed by. The person of a prophet was not inviolate, and both before and after the days of Amos prophets were imperilled and even slain by the wrath of mobs or of kings. Still they were recognized as a privileged class, and when their words had produced on the multitude so deep an impression as those of Amos, it was not easy to silence or interfere with them. Amaziah, however, the high priest of Bethel, was the representative and protector of the popular religion, and he thought it time to exert his power. He went to Jeroboam and accused the prophet of a treason which was likely to produce dangerous discontent, for "the land is not able to bear all his words." He doubly misrepresented what Amos had said—for Amos had *not* said, as he quoted him—"Jeroboam shall die by the sword"; and while he had prophesied the devastation of the high places and sanctuaries he had not said that "Israel should be led away captive."

Whether Jeroboam received some truer account of the real words of Amos, or whether he respected his prophetic character and saw the general justice of his denunciation, we cannot tell. It may be that he treated the priest's delation of him with the superb *insouciance* of a powerful conqueror, who did not trouble himself with the opinions of the peasantry. However that may be, it is clear that he did not think it worth while to take any overt step, and apparently he left the priest to manage the affair as he thought best.

From Amaziah's point of view it cannot be said that he was either cruel or intolerant; he was only cynical. "Seer," he said to Amos, "go, flee thee away unto the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and there thou mayest prophesy. But at Bethel thou shalt not prophesy any more, because it is a royal sanctuary, and it is a seat of the kingdom."

Thus did the priest of Bethel openly betray his contempt for the prophet's calling, and tried to make its regulation a mere

[1] Isa. xxxiv. 11, 12; 2 Kings xxi. 13; Lam. ii. 8.

affair of police. That any genuine Israelite, with all the past traditions of Israel, and the recent memories of Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, could act thus, showed a deeply seated apostasy from old tradition.

And it kindled the deep wrath of the prophet. Turning upon the high priest of the golden calf as Jeremiah turned upon Pashur when he prophesied that his name should be no more Pashur but Magor-missabib, "terror on every side," so Amos denounced to Amaziah that the destruction was now very near, and that it would fall personally upon him. High as was his pride of place, yet in the day of Assyrian invasion his wife should be reduced to earn her living by infamy, his sons and daughters should be slain by the sword, his inheritance should be divided among aliens, and as Israel should go into captivity, so the priest himself should die in a polluted land.

How and when the doom was fulfilled we have no record; but after the denunciation Amos, before he departed, added yet one more utterance. He was shown in vision a basket of summer fruit. Its ripeness portended that the sins of Israel were now ripe for punishment. The songs of the temple would be turned to howlings. There would be plenty of corpses everywhere, and they would be cast forth in the silent anguish of despair.

After he had delivered this message, plain beyond all his previous ones, Amos yielded to force. Feeling that his mission was accomplished, he returned to his native Tekoah, where he probably committed to writing, and made public the abbreviated book of his oral prophecies. In the calm of his rural life he would have abundant leisure to elaborate his words, and it is not improbable that the Messianic epilogue was an afterthought of hope and consolation, not delivered to the idolaters of Bethel and Samaria, but addressed in writing to all who waited for the consolation of Israel. Constant and indignant references to the violent suppression of his testimony occur throughout his Book.[1]

After this we have not a single detail respecting him. Late and worthless legend says that Amaziah first beat him with leaded thongs,[2] and then that Hosea, the son of Amaziah, broke

[1] Amos ii. 12; v. 10, 13; vi. 3, &c.

[2] "Lives of the Prophets," printed with the works of Epiphanius, ii. 145 (Knobel, "Prophetismus," 146).

his temples with a stake. He was carried dying to his own land.[1] The story is an invention, and Amos probably died peacefully at Tekoah, where his tomb was still shown in the days of Jerome.

[1] Heb. xi. 35. ἄλλοι δὲ ἐτυμπανίσθησαν.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS.

General subject of his prophecy—Five main sections:—I. The first section: Denunciation of seven nations—Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah—The iniquities of Israel—Her fourfold transgressions—Her base ingratitude—Noble moral indignation. II. The Condemnation—1. Significance of his mission—2. The arraignment—α. For civil oppression—β. For luxury—γ. For impenitence. III. The final doom—1. The dirge—2. Renewed accusations—3. Reproof of formalism—4. Fresh menaces—5. The doom once more. IV. Four visions and a history. V. Last warnings—One vision more—Last words of hope.

WE have now seen all that is known of Amos, and of the age in which he wrote, and the conditions by which he was surrounded. We are therefore in a position to turn with intelligence to the Book of his prophecy.

His whole message centres in the common prophetic conviction that God is the sole and righteous Governor of the world, judging the people righteously, and when they rebel, dashing them to pieces like a potter's vessel.

His Book falls into five main sections. 1. In the first of these (chaps. i. ii.), he arraigns Israel and the neighbouring nations for their guilt, and threatens them with Divine punishment.

2. He establishes specially the iniquity, and therefore the necessary doom of Samaria (chaps. iii. iv.).

3. He mingles his continued warnings and reproaches with lamentations for the approaching calamity (v. vi.).

4. He narrates five visions (vii. 1–ix. 10), interposing between the third and fourth visions the episode of his personal history, when his work was violently interrupted by the jealousy and alarm of the priest Amaziah (vii. 10–17).

5. He ends with an epilogue of hope and promise for the future, when punishment has accomplished its destined work (ix. 7–15).

Let us proceed to consider each section more in detail.

I. The First Section (i. ii.).

Standing as it were on his prophetic watchtower, Amos surveys the people which lay around Judah and Israel. They, too, were guilty; their fate would involve and be involved in the fate of the holy nation.

After the heading, which may be the addition of a later editor, he opens as it were with a mighty peal of thunder, which from the energy and vividness of his imagery could not fail to awaken attention.[1]

> "The Lord will roar from Zion,
> From Jerusalem will He utter His voice;
> And the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn,
> And the head of Carmel shall be parched."

The voice of the Lord which speaks in this instance is a voice of judgment and wrath, the voice which breaketh the cedar-trees and discovereth the thick bushes; and before its flame the whole land is scorched, from the south-eastern habitations of the sheperds in Amos's own home of Tekoah to the far north-western, where the purple outline of Carmel rose in the distance, and where all the verdure and flowery loveliness is dried as before the Sirocco.

Then with the solemn opening, "Thus saith the Eternal," he addresses seven nations before he finally pronounces the sweeping, crushing doom on Israel, for whom his mission was mainly intended.

1. He begins with Syria, the most distant and least akin.

"Thus saith the Lord: For the three transgressions of Damascus and for the four; I take it not back."

The same powerful prelude introduces each of the eight strophes, and then by a *refrain*, of which the power is felt in all literature, the impression on the memory and imagination is greatly deepened. The phrase, "for the three transgressions and for the four," has a manifold significance.[2] It implies that

[1] How much the force of the words was felt is shown from their recurrence in Joel iii. 16. Wilton in his "Negeb" (p. 42), points out how Amos alludes to the lion more frequently than other prophets. Lions seem to have abounded in this south country, and "the prophet of the Negeb" was probably familiar with them.

[2] For interesting parallels to this phrase see Job v. 19; xxxiii. 29, "twice and thrice;" Prov. xxx. &c.

the wickedness which called down the judgment was growing and increasing from year to year.

The fourth transgression is the most heinous, but it does not stand alone. It is but the epitome of age-long misdoing; the crimson flower of crime which has long been immanent in the sap of the tree. Sin is cumulative. Beginning like the letting out of water it increases step by step in volume and intensity. A nation may long hold in its hands the cup of its abominations, but it is inevitable that at last when it has grown more accustomed to sin, more bold in defiance of God's law, it fills the goblet to the brim, and it runs over, and the time has come when it must be filled no longer with "the wine of its fornications" but with "the wine of the wrath of God." In no instance but the last are the first three transgressions mentioned. It is enough to refer to the last, which is their abridgment and consummation.

The crowning crime of Damascus has been that "they threshed Gilead with the iron sledges." The exact event alluded to is uncertain, but Syria was constantly engaged in petty wars with Israel, and specially harassed its eastward division beyond the Jordan, where the cities were less defended, and to which it was not easy to move troops with rapidity.[1] Nothing is more probable than that in these border wars the Syrians, perhaps provoked in a particular instance by some obstinate defence, had subjected the inhabitants of conquered villages to the same kind of horrible barbarity which even David inflicted on the people of Moab, when he placed them under saws and axes and harrows of iron.[2] The fact that David acted thus, the fact that the sacred historian records the cruelty without condemnation, has made Christian commentators in all ages imagine that they were bound to defend them. We may hope that the day is now past in which men can maintain the casuistry into which they have been led by the necessity of maintaining a false theory about inspiration at the expense alike of the character of God, and the eternal laws of morality. When David treated in this way his conquered enemies he was guilty of horrible barbarity, and is as little to be excused in the abstract as Djezzar "the butcher" is to be excused for burying his enemies up to the neck in the ground and then driving a ploughshare through their heads. Nothing but the bluntness

[1] 2 Kings viii. 12; x. 32, 33; xiii. 22.
[2] 2 Kings xiii. 7. Comp. Prov. xx. 26.

of moral sense which may arise from the ignorance of an age or the inveteracy of a custom can enable any man to commit such crimes without a loss of self-respect. All that can be said of such deeds is that they may be regarded rather as the *vitia temporis* than the *vitia hominis*. In the case of Amos the development of moral indignation may have been quickened by the fact that such horrors as the crushing men to death under sledges of iron were inflicted on Israelites themselves, and not by them upon their enemies. The sentiment of righteousness has often been awaked by making a man feel in his own person its cruel violation. At any rate, Amos not only condemns the crime, but regards it as a culminating atrocity, calling for and bringing down the wrath of heaven. In thus doing he expressed the true sense of the prophets, to whom *as a rule* cruelty is abhorrent, by whomsoever practised, and under whatsoever real and imagined sanctions.

Note further the tremendous aposiopēsis in the phrase, "For the three transgressions of Damascus, and for the four, I will not turn IT away." What lies hid in the awful vagueness of the "it"? The A. V. renders the clause, "I will not turn away *the punishment thereof*." But the Hebrew literally means, "I take not *that* back" (comp. Isa. xliii. 13). The margin of the R. V. suggests the meaning, "I revoke not my word"; but it is more in accordance with the powerful rhetoric of the prophet to suppose the "*that*" to refer to a retribution which looms all the more terribly through the imagination which will not frame it in words. One element of the punishment is immediately mentioned, but only in general terms.

For because Damascus has thus rioted in blood the Lord says, "I will send a fire into the palaces of Hazael, which shall devour Benhadad's palaces.[1] And I will break the bar of Damascus,[2] and cut off him that sitteth (on the throne) in the valley of Aven,[3] and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden, and Aram's nation shall go into captivity unto Kir, SAITH THE LORD."[4]

[1] Benhadad III., son of the usurper, Hazael (2 Kings xiii. 24).

[2] Comp. 1 Kings iv. 13; Psa. cvii. 16.

[3] *Bikath*-Aven or "the *cleft* of Aven." Cœle-Syria or Hollow Syria, between Libanus and Antilibanus is still called El-bukāa by the Arabs. Joshua (xi. 17; xii. 7) speaks of the valley (*Bikah*) of Lebanon.

[4] Comp. 2 Kings xvi. 9; Jer. xlix. 27 (written when the doom had

In each instance the fire is invoked to smite the guilty people —namely, the conflagration and massacre of Assyrian conquest. The house of Hazael which had usurped the palaces of Benhadad should perish; the massive bar of the city gates should be broken. The rulers in the Sun Valley—the Valley of Baalbek—and in the fair district known as "Paradise," should be destroyed, and the cruel Syrians should be deported to Armenia, to the banks of the river Kir.[1] The "saith the Lord," is another emphatic refrain of the "Thus saith the Lord" at the beginning of the clause.

2. From the north he passes (i. 6–8) to the Philistines on the south-west. They, too, were enemies and aliens. On them Jehovah charges the crowning iniquity that they "led away whole villages to give them to Edom." In some of the incessant border raids, the Philistines, no longer capable of open war, had fallen on the defenceless villages, and not content with taking away their entire inhabitants, had sold them into cruel slavery to their bitter and hereditary foes, the Edomites.[2] The crime would not be unpunished. Gaza should be burnt,[3] Ashdod dispeopled, the ruler of Ascalon slain, and Ekron visited. Gath and the remnant of Philistia should perish—saith the Lord.

3. Then he turns against Tyre. The old brotherly covenant between David and Solomon and Hiram, should have prevented the Phœnicians from treacherous attacks on the friendly kingdom.[4] But they had been guilty of the same crime as the Philistines, and had handed over "an entire city" to Edom, "Therefore should fire devour the walls and palaces of Tyre."

4. And now the judgment comes nearer, for it falls on the brother-nation of Edom. Corrupting his compassions, giving vent to the rending violence of his anger, cherishing an ancient wrath, Edom had not refrained from hostilities against Israel.

already been fulfilled). By "Aven" ("vanity") On is perhaps intended (Heliopolis or Baalbek), see Ezek. xxx. 17. Nothing is known of Beth-Eden. It may be Beit-el-jame ("House of Paradise"), about eight hours from Damascus (Porter's "Five Years in Syria," i. 313).

[1] The land from which they sprang (Am. ix. 7).

[2] Joel iii. 1–8. Perhaps the present allusion is to the Philistine invasion in the reign of Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17).

[3] See Jer. xlvii. 1: "before that Pharaoh smote Gaza."

[4] 1 Kings v. 1; ix. 11–14. Ewald thinks that the covenant meant is the one which *should* have existed between Esau and Jacob.

Therefore, fire should devour Teman and the palaces of Bosrah.[1]

5. And still deadlier had been the atrocity of Ammon. Merely out of lust of gain, to increase their territory, the Ammonites had fallen on the villages of Gilead, and had ripped up remorselessly the women with child.[2] Heavier, therefore, is the judgment which should fall on them.[3] Rabbah should perish with fire, and shouting, and tempest, and its king and his princes should all go into captivity.[4]

6. And with similar exultation and execration, and trumpet-blasts, and murder of its Sheykh,[5] and of its princes, Moab also, and the palaces of Qerioth should perish.[6] The final sin of Moab had been the madness of posthumous hate, which had caused them to burn to lime the bones of the king of Edom, whose body had fallen into their possession.[7]

7. Nearer and nearer to Israel had the judgment been approaching. Still, as yet it had only fallen on nations who, even when they were near of kin, had shown themselves ruthless and hostile. Now, however, a spasm of serious alarm must have touched the leaders and hearers of the prophet in Samaria, when the seventh woe was pronounced on *Judah.* They must have felt that Judah, whatever her faults, was much less guilty than themselves. And yet fire is menaced to Judah and the palaces of Jerusalem[8] because, self-deceived, as their fathers

[1] Amos ix. 12; Joel iii. 19.

[2] Comp. Jer. xlix. 1–3; and for these atrocities 1 Sam. xi. 2; 2 Kings xv. 16, &c.

[3] 2 Kings viii. 12; Hos. xiv. 1.

[4] Even as far back as the days of Jeremiah (xlix. 3, comp. LXX.) there seems to have been another reading, "Milcom and his Priests" for "his king and his princes;" as though the allusion were to a seizure of the idol Moloch. Comp. Jer. xlviii. 7.

[5] The *king* of Moab seems to have been deposed by Jeroboam II., who only left the Moabites under a vassal-Sheykh, *Shophet, Suffes,* or "Judge" (vi. 14).

[6] Qerioth is possibly another name for the capital of Moab—Ar—or Kir—Moab (Isa. xv. 1. Comp. Jer. xlviii. 24).

[7] Comp. 2 Kings iii. 9. The Jews thought that the body of the king of Edom, who had been an ally of Jehoran and Jehoshaphat, had come into the hands of the king of Moab, who thus basely wreaked his vengeance upon the dead. Delitzsch remarks that inhuman cruelty is ever the trait of the Ammonites, boastful arrogance of the Moabites, and crafty wiliness of the Edomites.

[8] 2 Kings xxv. 9; Jer. xvii. 27.

were,[1] the Jews had despised the laws and teaching of the Lord.

8. Seven times had the thunder rolled, seven times the flame fallen. Hitherto, Israel may have gazed with something of delight—at the utmost with indifference—on the threatened overthrow, by conquest and devastation, of the surrounding peoples, with every one of whom they were at enmity, and all of whom were idolatrous except Judah. And Judah was at any rate a rival; but now the storm bursts with accumulated force on Israel herself.

All her four crimes are detailed. (1) The Israelites, too, trade in men—selling the innocent poor for money, and the helpless for a pair of shoes—selling them so cheap that the price only sufficed for ornamental sandals.[2] (2) They "pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor"—meaning either by a forcible exaggeration that their greed of land went so far that they grudged the very dust which the suppliants cast upon their heads, or that they took a savage delight in watching their misery when they stood as sentenced criminals with ashes sprinkled on their hair.[3] (3) In their idolatrous feasts they were guilty—even father and son together—of vile licentiousness. (4) Near every altar they lay down on clothes taken in pledge, which thus pitilessly left the poor debtors unprotected against the dews and chills of night;[3] and, in the house of their false gods, they drank the wine purchased from unjust fines.

And all this in gross forgetfulness of how God's mercy had destroyed before them, root and branch, the giant Amorites, tall as the cedars, strong as the oaks, and given their land to them—a nation of rescued serfs! And God had made their youths consecrated Nazarites, and their sons prophets, while they had offered wine to tempt the Nazarites to break their vow, and had forbidden the prophets to speak the message of God.[4] "Behold!"—such is the fearful metaphor which the prophet does not hesitate to put into the mouth of God—"Behold, I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves."[5]

[1] A proverbial expression (viii. 6). [2] Neh. ix. 1; Lam. ii. 10.

[3] Exod. xxii. 26; Deut. xxiv. 12, 13.

[4] Comp. 1 Kings xix. 2, 3, xxii. 26, 27; 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Isa. xxx. 10, &c.

[5] Such seems to be the correct translation of the margin in the R.V. The text, with Ewald and others, renders it, "I will press you as a cart," &c., but it seems doubtful whether the Hebrew will bear this

Therefore the swift, the strong, the mighty, the archer, the runner, the bold-hearted, should all be overwhelmed in a common catastrophe of vain flight, and even the heroes who most scorned fear, should, in that day, flee away naked—saith the Lord.

It has been observed that the word used for "saith" (נְאֻם) here, and in twenty other places, by Amos, has far more significance than the English suggests. Here it forms the solemn close of this part of the prophecy. It occurs only four times in Hosea, and once in Joel. It is most common in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

So end the first two chapters of Amos; and no more powerful burden was ever written. If Amos be the earliest prophet whose writings we possess, the startling grandeur of this opening utterance might indeed be well compared to the roar of a lion from Jerusalem.

And if in these words, which throb with the light and flame of righteousness and moral indignation, we may select one feature which, more than another, is characteristic of Hebrew prophecy, we should fix on the strong reprobation of Edom for a crime against abstract mercy and morality, and one which in no way affected Israel. Of the details of the incident itself —what it was which induced Edom to burn the bones of the king of Moab into lime—we know nothing. They may have thought to inflict the terrible form of revenge, which, according to ancient superstition, robbed the dead, whose mortal remains had been destroyed and scattered, of all chance of a life beyond the grave. But however that may be, they had ignobly warred against the dead, and failed in the respect due to the sad relics of mortality, and therefore the prophet denounces against them the stern message of doom. It is a noble feature in the messages of this prophet, that the crime for which he denounces the nations is in each instance an act of gross cruelty. It matters nothing that in the case of Ammon the cruelty has been committed against an enemy of Israel. Atrocities are atrocities by whomsoever committed. The spirit of ruthless harshness, of a wrath that "casts off pity," of an anger that "tears perpetually," is a demon-spirit in whomsoever found, and deserves,

meaning. See Professor Gandell's note in the "Speaker's Commentary." The amazing boldness of the metaphor is quite in accordance with the style of Amos.

and will receive, the punishment of heaven. The shepherd of Tekoah had learnt this among his sheepfolds.

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sheep that is among the lovely hills.
In him the savage virtues of his race,
Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts, were dead;
Nor did he change, but kept in lofty place
The wisdom which adversity had bred."

II. The Condemnation.

The second oration of Amos (iii. iv.) is not inferior to the first in grandeur and sustained intensity. Having reached, step by step, to Israel, the prophet continues to deal with the crimes of the Northern Kingdom. He does so in five strophes.

First (iii. 1–8) he shows that the menace of doom as uttered by a prophet's voice is not, and cannot be, accidental. As other effects follow inevitably from definite causes, so the utterance of the prophet ought to be a sign of peril since it is a reverberation of the voice of God.

2. Next, he upbraids them in succession for three forms of crime (iii. 8—iv. 11), and first (iii. 8–15), injustice in the civil government, involving the certainty of ruinous disaster.

3. He denounces doom on the luxury and idolatry of the women (iv. 1–3).

4. He vehemently reproves them for the impenitence shown by repeated rejection of warnings.

5. He summons them before the awful bar of judgment to meet their unknown doom.

In closer analysis the strophes are as follows:—

1. Significance of his Mission (iii. 1–8).

Amos tells them that his words are addressed to all the sons of Israel, and therefore, of course, especially the Ten Tribes who formed so much the larger part of the kingdom. They were a chosen nation, therefore they should be punished. They stood most fully in the light, and therefore they cast a darker shadow. In his appearance at Samaria they ought to see the most certain omen of danger. Two walk together: must there not be some agreement to make them do so? A lion roars: is it not a proof that his prey

is near? A young lion growls in his den: must it not be that he has seized his food? Can a bird be captured if there is no net? Is a springe displaced without the bird being caught? Can a war-trumpet be blown in a city without the people taking alarm? Can there be a calamity in a city apart from God's Providence? So then the Prophet does not appear without a cause. His words cannot be accidental. He only speaks because his eyes have been enlightened to see what God intends. "The lion roareth—who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken: who can but prophesy?"

2. THE ARRAIGNMENT.

a. For civil oppression (iii. 9–15). This then is the message which shows that sin has become a source of deadly peril.

The enemies of Israel—the Philistines of Ashdod, the people of Egypt—are summoned to take their stand on the mountains of Samaria which encircle the city like a crown of pride, and thence to look down in scorn and exultation on the capital of their foe.[1] It is full of tumults; it is full of oppression; the rules of righteousness seem to have been forgotten. The magnificent palaces were store-houses on which might be written only cruelty and injustice. Therefore, the eye of the seer saw a very different spectacle from that seen by others in the aspect of the gorgeous and self-indulgent city. It saw distress, the land encompassed by armies, shattered forts, plundered palaces. *Now* the sons of Israel sit luxurious on couches covered with damasked cushions.[2] They would soon be barely able to save themselves in a maimed and ruined condition, like the shinbone or fragment of an ear which alone a shepherd can rescue from a lion. Of what avail would the calf-altars of Bethel be, when shaken by an earthquake they would tumble to ruin, and their horns be broken off.[3] In that same earthquake the houses of joy in the joyous city should collapse, the summer and the winter apartments, and the houses of ivory should have an end—saith the Lord.

β. The luxury and the punishment of the women (iv. 1–3). When the women of a society are wholly absorbed in callous

[1] Comp. Jer. iv. 16.

[2] iii. 12, A.V. marg., "on the bed's feet." R.V., "on the silken cushions of a bed.' The words seem literally to mean "on a couch's damask." Damascus was early known for silken and woollen fabrics (Ezek. xxvii. 11).

[3] Comp. ix. 1–6.

worldliness and luxurious surfeit it is the strongest proof that the society is doomed. For woman is naturally more moral and more religious than man, and when her natural instincts of modesty and reverence have been absorbed the best hopes of a moral revival are extinguished. It was so with the women of Samaria. Amos spares them as little as do the other prophets; he contemptuously addresses them as fat cows of Bashan upon the mountain of Samaria, and tells how they afflict the suffering and crush the helpless to supply themselves with means to sate their drunkenness. Their cry to their lords is "Bring to us drink." Ah! from those ivory palaces they should be dragged forth by the brutal conqueror, dragged forth by the hair, as the fisherman drags his prey out of the water with hooks.[1] They would, indeed, rush to escape, rush with all the selfishness of hard egotism, each for herself, to escape out of the breaches of the ruined walls, and each as she flies shall fling away her Rimmona to the mountain—her idol of the Syrian love-goddess, of which the emblem was a pomegranate.[2]

γ. *The aggravation of impenitence* (iv. 4–11). The third damning charge brought by the prophet against the Ten Tribes is that of impenitence in despite of incessant warnings. He tauntingly begins by bidding them to continue the formal ritualisms on which they relied.[3] This very worship was a crime, for it was half idolatrous: there was iniquity even in their holy things. So when they went on their religious pilgrimages to Bethel and to Gilgal it was only to add sin to sin. Vain were their daily morning sacrifices, vain their scrupulosity in tithes,

[1] Jer. xvi. 16; Ezek. xxix. 4.

[2] Comp. Isa. ii. 20. In this difficult, and probably corrupt, verse I follow Ewald, who thinks that here something must have been lost. The R.V. renders it: "Ye shall cast yourselves into Harmon." If Ewald be right, Rimmona is the feminine of the god Rimmon (2 Kings v. 18). The LXX. render it "to be flung to Mount Rimmon." The Targum, Peshito, and Vulg. render "on to the mountains of Armenia." Hitzig, altering the reading, translates it, "Ye shall be cast away to Hadad-Rimmon," and Steiner identifies Hadad-Rimmon with the Syrian Adonis and his immoral worship.

[3] In iv. 4, the "after three years" of the A.V. (marg. three *years* of days), should be "every three days" as in R.V. It may be an ironical allusion to the custom of bringing tithes every third year (Deut. xxvi. 12). These Pharisees of the calf-worship were scrupulous about their tithes of mint, anise, and cummin.

vain the leavened thank-offerings which they burned,[1] and the vaunted free-will-offerings: in all which things they pleased themselves. Why had they not rather attended to God's repeated admonitions? (iv. 4, 5.)

i. He had sent them a general famine—yet they repented not (iv. 6).

ii. He had withheld the rain; had made the rainfall partial and local, so that two or three cities wandered to another to get water, and did not get enough: yet they repented not (iv. 7, 8).

iii. He had smitten them with drought, and yellow blight, and locusts: yet they repented not (iv. 9).

iv. He had smitten them with the plague of Egypt, had slain their youths in battle, and the horses, which were but a vain thing to save them,[2] had filled the air with the stench of unburied corpses: yet they repented not (iv. 10).

v. He had sent earthquake and burning among them, like that which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah: yet they repented not (iv. 11).[3]

III. The Final Doom (iv. 12, 13).

Since, then, these judgments had all failed of their object, nothing remained but the passing of the sentence. Something worse and deadlier than these calamities awaited them. He does not say what it is. He leaves it in dreadful vagueness.

"Therefore *thus* will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do *this* unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!"

Who is that God? They cannot doubt. It is He who built the mountains, and createth the viewless wind, and declareth men's thoughts, and maketh sunrise, and treadeth upon the high-places of the earth. "The Lord, the God of hosts is His name."

So ends the second overwhelming burden. The title "the Lord of Hosts"—Jehovah-Tsebâôth—the leader of all the hosts of God. Whether the primary allusion was to the armies of the nation (Psa. xliv. 9) or to the stars of heaven is uncertain, but this is one of the earliest occurrences of the name which is not

[1] Leaven was forbidden in burnt-offerings (Lev. vii. 13; xxiii. 17).

[2] See Psa. xx.

[3] Gen. xix. 29. The words "a brand plucked out of the burning," are repeated in Zech. iii. 2.

found in the Hexateuch, though it is so common in the Psalms, the Prophets,[1] and in the Historical Books.

THE LAMENTATION MINGLED WITH REPROACHES AND APPEALS (v. vi.).

1. *The Dirge* (v. 1–9). First he sings his wail over Israel, the virgin desolate and prostrate. Her cities should be decimated. The city which had a thousand soldiers should have but a hundred; the village that had but a hundred shall be left with only ten (v. 1–3).

Yet this need not be. Two words—"Seek-ye-me and-live"—present the absolute alternative. But to seek God they must not seek Bethel, Gilgal, or Beersheba. For Gilgal should be to them but as gall, and Bethel, "House of God," become Beth-Aven, "House of Vanity." If they would not seek God He should be as an unquenchable fire to the House of Joseph, for who could resist Him who made the Seven Stars and the Falling Giant,[2] and darkened noonday and brightened midnight, and poured the sea over the dry land, who flasheth destruction upon strong men and strong fortresses (v. 4–9).

2. *Renewed accusations* (v. 10–17). Were they not unjust? Did they not hate just reproofs, and defraud and trample on the poor? They shall not dwell in their stone houses, or drink the wine of their pleasant vineyards, for they oppressed and starved the helpless, and scarcely any wise man durst face the peril of reproving them. Repentance alone could save the remnant of them! But of repentance there is no sign, and therefore in all markets and all streets should be wailing, and not only the hired mourners, but even husbandmen should be called from their plough to wail, and vine dressers from their vineyards, when God passed through their midst—saith the Lord!

3. *Reproof of hypocrisy and formalism* (v. 18–27). Some pretended to deplore the existing state of the nation, and to long for the day of the Lord. Yet, for all but the faithful and sincere, that day should be darkness and not light, a judgment not a deliverance, as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him, or went into his house and leaned on a wall and a serpent bit him. Did they rely on their external service—feasts and holidays, and

[1] But not in Ezekiel.

[2] Pleiades (in the Heb. "cluster") and Orion (*Kesil*, "the impious one"). These constellations are joined by Job (ix. 9) and also by Homer ("Il." xviii. 486).

burnt-offerings, and hymns, and church music? Vain reliance! God hated and despised such cheap things as these. What He required was the full wave of justice, and the everflowing stream of righteousness. Had the people sacrificed to God in the wilderness?[1] Not at any rate in such large measure as they were doing now. But now the sacrifices of many of them were mixed up with pure idolatry, and they and their idols should be carried away captive. Yes! carrying with them the shrines and symbols of their images, they should be taken into captivity beyond Damascus[2]—saith the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.[3]

4. *Fresh expostulations and menaces* (vi. 1–10). They were at ease—the nobles of Zion and Samaria. God had blessed them; they were the first among the neighbouring nations—for were Calno or Hamath or Gath greater than they?[4] Yet, ungrateful for their blessings, they bid the evil day avaunt, and give themselves up to violence, lolling on ivory beds, at delicate banquets, amid æsthetic music and wassail bowls, and perfumes, supremely careless of the deep wounds of their country. Therefore they first should go into captivity, shrieking on their way! For God has sworn His hatred of their pride, and palaces, and crowded cities. The curse of pestilence should be added to the curse of war (vi. 1–8). Then follows a picture of terrific energy. A house has been smitten with plague, so that only ten people remain in it; but the plague still riots amid this residue.[5] Their own uncle or kinsman comes to take the corpses out of the houses in the dread exigency of the time,

[1] To the question of ver. 25, "Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices . . . ?" the answer "No" is implied. [2] A vague expression for Assyria.

[3] The right reading and rendering of ver. 26 seems to be, "so shall ye take up (on the road of exile) Sakkuth (perhaps an Assyrian name for Moloch) your King, and Kewan, your god-star, your images (*i.e.*, the image of the planet Saturn)." See Driver, "Hebr. Tenses," § 119a. and Ewald. The LXX. render Sikkuth by "tabernacle," and substitute Raiphan for Kewan, perhaps from a clerical error in the Hebrew manuscript. Remphan (Acts viii. 43) is a further corruption.

[4] Calno was near the site of Ktesiphon. Hamath (known later as Epiphaneia) on the Orontes was humiliated by Shalmaneser II. in 850 B.C., and overthrown by Sargon in 720 B.C. Gath had been crushed by Uzziah. The "*these kingdoms*" of vi. 2, means Israel and Judah.

[5] Such scenes may have occurred in the three years' siege of Samaria by the Assyrians (2 Kings xvii. 5).

not to bury but to burn them.[1] One miserable sufferer alone remains in some far corner of the house, and the kinsman asks "if there is any other survivor?" "No!" is the despairing reply: and terrified lest the poor sick man should add any single word either of sorrow or superstition, or despair, the new-comer cries out "Hush! for Jehovah's name is not to be mentioned here."[2] Such is the stupefaction of despair that even the voice of anguish has to be hushed, lest so much as the merest mention of the Ineffable's name should incense Jehovah more! And thus the curtain rushes down like a storm on desolation and silence! (9–10).

5. *The Doom once more* (vi. 11–14). Earthquake! the palace in ruins, the hovel rent! (11.) And why? Horses cannot run up rocks nor oxen plough there, yet you think that the very nature of things *can* be reversed in the region of eternal verities! you turn justice to gall, and the fruit of righteousness to wormwood! And on what do ye rely? on a thing of nought! on self-exaltation self-secured! Here then comes the sentence with fatal, unwonted, unmistakable clearness! God will raise up against you a nation which shall weigh you down from the valley of Hamath to the Wady of the Arabah—from the northernmost range of the conquests of your victorious king down to the torrent-bed which is the southernmost boundary of your kingdoms towards the desert of Egypt[3] (12–14).

What nation could that be? It could be but one nation—the awful, dreaded, remorseless Assyria sweeping downwards through the gorge between Libanus and Antilibanus—Assyria that had already made itself terrifically felt in Syria, in Israel, even in Judah; Assyria the most ruthless, and the most irresistible of enemies!

Can we at all measure what the awe and horror of such an announcement would be to a people prosperous and wealthy, living in careless luxury under the long reign of a victorious

[1] The dead are burned out of necessity. See 1 Sam. xxxi. 12. The usual custom of the Hebrews was to bury the dead, but during a siege the cemetery outside the city would be inaccessible.

[2] To mention God's name implies trust and praise (Psa. xx. 8, Josh. xxiii. 7). "The Jewish Commentators," says Professor Gandell, "put the last words in the mouth of the sick man, as if saying, Remove the dead, for while they lived they prayed not in the name of the Lord."

[3] The *nachal ha-arabim*, also called "the brook of willows" (Isa. xv 7) in the southern border of Moab, flowing into the Dead Sea.

hero? We see the bas-reliefs from Assyrian palaces; we see their kings hunting the lion, or flaying their captives, or looking on at their tortures, or preceded by the eagles carrying the entrails of the slain. We see the jewelled despot in his palace at his banquet with his queen, while opposite to him dangles from the bough of a tree the ghastly head of some defeated king. But what to us are *pictures* were to them frightfully-near possibilities; and what to us are barbarous names sounded in their ears like the knell of torment and of death. And yet there was space for repentance! and yet they knew not the day of their visitation!

IV. Four Visions and a History (vii. 1–viii. 3).

The prophets knew the advantage of varied methods, and made it their one aim to use such styles of teaching as would most effectually move and reach the people. After the three great rhythmic orations which we have been considering Amos conveys fresh lessons by symbolic visions.

First vision (vii. 1–3).—He sees the vision of green fields. The early growth of hay which seems to have been claimed for the use of the kings was over, and the after-growth was beginning to shoot up. But lo! God had formed locusts, and they ate up the grass. Fearful lest famine should ensue if they devoured the crops of wheat, the prophet pathetically pleads for his country.

"O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee! How shall Jacob stand? for he is small!"

The Lord heard the pitiful cry and repented of His purpose. "It shall not be," saith the Lord.

Second vision (vii. 4–6).—Behold one cried, "The Lord Jehovah will contend by fire." And fire came so terrible that it devoured not the land only, but also the great deep.[1] Again the prophet pleads—

"O Lord God, cease, I beseech Thee! How shall Jacob stand? for he is small!"

Again his intercession is heard; again the Lord repents of His purpose.

"This also shall not be," saith the Lord God.

Third vision (vii. 7–9).—The third vision was different in

[1] The meaning of the verse is uncertain and difficult. Some by "deep" (*tehôm*) understand deep springs of moisture.

kind and more fatal in its issue. The prophet sees Jehovah Himself standing on the wall of a well-built city, a plumbline in His hand.

"What seest thou, Amos?"

"A plumbline!"

The plumbline is being used to measure the city for destruction.[1] And this time there is no space left to intercede. The Lord declares—

"The high-places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."[2]

The history (vii. 10–17).—Then follows the history which we have already seen. Amaziah, high priest of the calf-worship at Bethel, alarmed both at the stern menace of these predictions and at the deep effect which they are exercising upon the people, carries to the king an exaggerated and distorted version of the words of Amos, and reports him as a traitor. The king apparently does not personally interfere, but Amaziah, on his own authority, orders Amos to leave the royal chapel and city of Bethel, and return to his herds at Tekoah. Amos has no choice but to obey; but before he shakes the dust of Bethel off from his feet,[3] he denounces on Amaziah the awful judgment. He has been called from his peasant-toil to prophesy, and the priest has forbidden him to "drop" God's Word against the house of Isaac.

"Therefore thus saith the Lord: Thy wife shall commit whoredom in the city, thy sons and thy daughters fall by the sword, thy land be divided by lot, thou thyself die in a polluted land, and Israel be led away captive from his land."

Fourth vision (viii. 1–3).—But before the prophet turns his back—

"On those proud towers to swift destruction doomed,"

he narrates one more vision.

He sees a basket of ripe fruit.

"Then said Jehovah unto me, The ripeness is come to my people Israel; I will not any more forgive him![4] And the

[1] Isa. xxxiv. 11; Lam. ii. 8.

[2] The Assyrian is not mentioned, but stands ever in the far background (iv. 2; v. 5, 27; vi. 7, 14).

[3] Compare the conduct of the Gadarenes to our Lord (Luke viii. 37; *cf.* x. 10–12).

[4] There is a play of sound between קַיִץ "*summer*," and קֵץ "*end*."

songs of the palace shall be howlings in that day. Many corpses! Everywhere they cast them forth! Be silent!"[1]

Then, but with yet more crushing force, does he present the images of death and lamentation on which he has already touched. Twice had Israel been respited at his intercession; twice, and each time with more decisiveness and added horror, has Israel been condemned, the final condemnation being the natural consequence of the wilful obduracy which refuses to hear, and silences the messenger of God.

The three first advancing judgments of the visions have been compared to the gradual approach of the Assyrians. First, Pul—supposed to be Tiglath-Pileser—threatened the land, and was bribed to retire by the thousand talents of silver given to him by Menahem (2 Kings xv. 19, 20).

Then Tiglath-Pileser, invited by Ahaz, carried captive the tribes on the north and east (2 Kings xv. 29; xvi. 7; 1 Chron. v. 26).

Lastly Shalmaneser subdued the whole country, and carried away the remainder of the people.[2]

V. Last Warnings (viii. 4–14).

It is probable that this sequel to his Book was added by Amos when he had returned to his peaceful obscurity and toil. He bids the people of the Northern Kingdom weigh what he has said. They continued to practise oppression. They longed for each feast to end that they might return to their false weights and deceitful balances, and hard prices; that they might, as he has said already, "buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes," and sell their refuse wheat. But Jehovah had sworn that He would not forget their deeds. Had not the earthquake terrified them? The land would again rise and sink like the Nile, and all that dwell on it would wither!

Had they not also been terrified by two recent eclipses?[3] There would be a yet worse eclipse! The sun would go down at noon! There should be sackcloth on all loins and baldness on every head, and mourning as for an only son, and famine, not only of bread and water, but sore famine of that very word

[1] Another specimen of the incomparable energy of this prophet's language (v. 17; vi. 9).

[2] See the "Speaker's Commentary," vi. p. 549. [3] See *ante*, p. 36.

of the Lord which they had wilfully silenced. Even the fair virgins and the young warriors should faint for thirst, and they who swore by the idol-gods of Israel, the "god of Dan" and the "way of Beersheba," should fall for ever more![1]

One vision more (ix. 1–6).—Then Amos, in one final vision, saw Jehovah standing upon the altar, and calling to His angels, Smite the chapiters that the thresholds may shake, and shatter the fragments upon all their heads. He that fleeth shall not flee away, and he that escapeth shall not be delivered. Though they dig into Sheol they shall be dragged up; though they climb into heaven they shall be brought down. Carmel's thick forests shall not conceal them, and in the depths of the sea shall the serpent bite them.[2] Even into captivity shall the sword pursue them, for the eye of the Lord of heaven and earth and sea is upon them for evil—the Lord is His name.[3]

It is a terrible picture of shattered Temple and scattered worshippers pursued even to annihilation, so far as all that is evil in them is concerned. And yet there is a hope, an eternal hope. The vision of the true prophet never ends in irremediable destruction or final gloom, since he knows that God is God, and can only cease to do good by ceasing to be God. This exterminating wrath cannot therefore be the end. No! the end must ever be forgiveness, restitution, peace. Evil should perish, but all that is good shall be restored. *Sanabiles fecit nationes terræ.*

Last words of hope (ix. 7–15).—Israel had been threatened with banishment from their own land. But had not God in ancient days and in recent times removed other nations in His providence? The Ethiopians had been brought to Africa from Arabia, Israel from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor,[4] the Syrians from Qir or Armenia. As a kingdom Israel

[1] By "the way of Beersheba" is meant, perhaps, the ritual there practised (comp. Acts ix. 2; xviii. 25, &c.). Beersheba was twenty-five miles south of Hebron, and was an ancient local sanctuary to which idolaters from the Northern Kingdom sometimes crossed over (see v. 5).

[2] The water-serpent (Isa. xxvii. 1).

[3] The "He that hath founded His *troop* in the earth" of the A.V. (ix. 6) should be (as in R.V.) "has founded His *vault* upon the earth," alluding to the "arch" or "vault of heaven" resting apparently on the earth.

[4] Comp. Jer. xlvii. 4; Gen. x. 14. Before the Exodus the Caphtorim destroyed the ancient inhabitants of Philistia (the Avim), and dwelt in their stead (Deut. ii. 23).

should perish from the land. Yet it should not perish utterly. It should be shaken among the heathen as corn is shaken in a sieve. As the chaff flies, so would all the disbelievers perish by the sword in spite of their security; but no grain of true corn should fall to the earth.

And so the whole land should once more be one kingdom under the House of David. The tabernacle of David had been rent with breaches and encumbered with ruins by Jeroboam I.[1] and by Joash, and by foreign foes; but it should be rebuilt, and its sway should extend over Edom and all nations over which God's name is named.[2] Then should follow in rich abundance the fruits of the earth, "and the mountains drop sweet wine, and all the hills flow down," and a happy people should no more be extirpated from a happy land—saith Jehovah thy God!

So ends this ancient and memorable Book of prophecy The storms roll far away into the distance, and there is a vision of peace. Any fulfilment of the prophecy in the comparative prosperity of Judah under Uzziah, and its escape from Assyria, would be quite inadequate to meet the prophet's language. Most of it has not been fulfilled in any literal sense, but its Messianic yearnings have found an abundant spiritual fulfilment in the glories of the Christian dispensation, and to the Messianic age it is applied in the speech of St. James to the Apostolic Synod.[3]

[1] "The Messianic import of this passage is admitted by the ancient Jews, among whom 'the Son of the Fallen' is a title of the Messiah" (Gandell). This title—Bar-Naphli—occurs in Sanhedrin f. 76. b.

[2] St. James, in quoting these verses (Acts xv. 15–17), seems to have followed a different text which also read *adam* "men" for Edom, for he quotes "that *the residue of men should seek after* the Lord."

[3] Acts xv. 16, 17.

CHAPTER VII.

HOSEA.[1]

Traditional heading—Probable dates of his various prophecies—Five divisions—The chronology partly artificial.

HOSEA almost certainly followed Amos, addressing the same society but, for the most part, at a later period of its history.

The key to the work and mission of Amos is given in the only two incidents of his life which are brought before us—his call to be a prophet, and his expulsion from the Northern Kingdom by the authority of the priest of Bethel. Similarly, we know but one incident in the life of Hosea. It was this incident which practically determined his prophetic calling; and, while it darkened all his life, was yet the Divine instrument of his education in the great truths which form his most precious and distinctive teaching.[2]

We cannot rely upon the traditional heading. It may have been attached to the prophecies—or to such fragments of them as were preserved—when the canon was formed after the period of the Exile.

"The word of the Lord which came to Hosea, son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel."

The latter clause is certainly accurate, and may have been added by the prophet himself, as the preface to the first three

[1] Hosea is placed first in the order of the Minor Prophets both in the Hebrew and the LXX. because his work was the longest and was therefore regarded as the most important, just as the Epistle to the Romans is placed first in order of St. Paul's Epistles.

[2] Professor W. Robertson Smith has written fully of Hosea in his "Prophets of Israel," pp. 159–169; and there is a paper on this prophet by Professor Davidson in *The Expositor* for 1879 (pp. 241–264). Professor Cheyne has edited Hosea in the "Cambridge Bible for Scholars."

chapters. These were written during the reign of Jeroboam II., as is decisively shown by i. 4, where the fall of the House of Jehu is spoken of as still future. But it is hardly likely that Hosea, a northerner and writing for northerners, would have dated his book by reigns of the kings of Judah. He did, indeed, blame the revolt of the first Jeroboam (i. 11; viii. 4), and he looked to a subsequent union of Israel under a Davidic king (iii. 5); but he still speaks of the king of Israel as "*our* king" (vii. 5).

After the personal history of the first three chapters there are five other divisions[1] which may, perhaps, be dimly perceptible, though they wholly lack the clear-cut precision of the burdens and strophes of Amos.

i. The first (iv–vi. 3) was probably written in the wild days of anarchy and confusion which followed when the strong hand of Jeroboam II. was removed from the helm of government. Its allusions point to the miserable reign of his son Zechariah.

ii. The second division (vi. 4–vii. 16) probably belongs to the reign of Menahem, when two kings, Zechariah and Shallum, had been murdered. In vii. 3–7 there seems to be an allusion to a shameful scene of drunken revelry, at the close of which the conspirators, headed by one chief rebel, murdered Zechariah at the close of a six months' reign. And although the phrase "all the kings have fallen" is sufficiently justified by the fact that Nadab, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Jehoram, and Zechariah all perished by the violence of assassins, it would come with even more force if it succeeded the murder of Shallum, who in the same year, 744, was in turn slain by the hand of Menahem.

iii. The third division (viii. 1–ix. 9) must have been written in the reign of Menahem, and after that fierce soldier had become the vassal of Assyria, if viii. 10 be rightly rendered, "that they may cease a little from the tribute to the king of princes," *i.e.*, to Tiglath-Pileser II., an usurper, who assumed that haughty title.[2] That Menahem became a vassal to Pul, which was the private name of Tiglath-Pileser, we know from 2 Kings xv. 20, and also from the mention Minikhimmi by

[1] More broadly we may divide thus—I. Falsity of Israel to God's covenant love (i.–iii). II. 1. Israel's guilt (iv.–viii.). 2. Israel's punishment (ix.–xi.). 3. Israel's forgiveness upon repentance (xii.–xiv.).

[2] "Records of the Past," v. 8; Ezek. xxvi. 7; Isa. x. 8: "For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings?"

Shalmaneser with Rasunnu (Rezin) among his tributaries in 738.

iv. The fourth division (ix. 10–xi. 11) was almost certainly written under King Hoshea. Already there had arisen the not unnatural project of forming an alliance with Egypt as a counterpoise to Assyria (vii. 11). The phrase, "Memphis shall bury them" (ix. 6), seems to allude to the cemetery of Memphis; and x. 5–7, xi. 11, apply perhaps to the final ruin and removal of King Hoshea, or to the days of the siege of Samaria, when his fate was imminent. The words "as Shalman spoiled Beth-Arbel in the day of battle" (x. 14), have been generally supposed to refer to some capture of Arbela near Pella, on the east of Jordan, by Shalmaneser III., in 775 or a little earlier.[1] The identification is, however, uncertain. Beth-Arbel *might* be the Assyrian Arbela, and as Shalman is not called king or king of Assyria, nor is Shalmaneser ever so abbreviated, the allusion may be to a Moabitish king Salamanu, who is mentioned among the vassals of Tiglath-Pileser.[2]

v. The fifth division (xii. 1–xiv. 9) was also evidently written before the final crash of ruin, during the last crisis of the national fate, but while hope is still a possibility.[3] Hosea either did not survive to witness the ultimate catastrophe of the Fall of Samaria (about 722), or, if he did, he wrote and spoke no more. In his days Israel was still wavering between subjection to Assyria and the ill-fated attempt to throw off the Assyrian yoke by alliance with So (Sevah or Sabaco), king of Egypt, which was the destruction of her last king, Hoshea. The Egyptian So, of the Ethiopian dynasty, was thought sufficiently powerful to promise support to the little sinking kingdom of Israel; but Egypt always proved to be a broken reed on which to lean. King Hoshea was summoned before Shalmaneser IV. to answer for his dubious allegiance. He did not dare to disobey, and on appearing before his suzerain he was flung into chains, and

[1] Schrader, "Keil inschriften," pp. 440–442.

[2] The Septuagint, the Vulgate, &c. (followed by Geiger) identify "Prince Salamon" with the Midianite Sheykh Zalmunna of Judg. viii. 18; Psa. lxxxiii. 11. On the horrible barbarity of dashing infants to pieces see 2 Kings viii. 12; Psa. cxxxvii. 8, 9.

[3] It has, however, been objected to this view that in vi. 8, xii. 11 he still speaks of Gilead as a part of the Northern Kingdom, although its inhabitants had been carried captive in the reign of Pekah (2 Kings xv. 29); and that he makes no allusion to the raid of Pekah and the Syrians against Judah.

suddenly disappears from history. In x. 3 we are told that "the people of Samaria shall bemoan the calves of Bethaven,[1] for its glory shall be carried into Assyria for a present to the fighting king" (A.V. King Jareb; comp. v. 13). Even in xiv. 3 the prophet is still thinking of a time when some composition with Assyria did not seem impossible.[2]

It follows from what we have seen that there is an obvious difference of standpoint between Hosea and Isaiah. Hosea writes while Israel still hesitates between the dangerous alliance of Egypt and of Assyria (xiv. 3)[3] to which he alludes even at the close of his prophecy; whereas in the days of Isaiah all question of alliance with the cruel and desolating power of Assyria was long at an end.

Besides this, Hosea constantly speaks of Gilead and Galilee as parts of the kingdom of Israel (v. 1; vi. 8; xii. 11), whereas in the later Micah (vii. 16) these places are spoken of as desolate after the depopulation which had been inflicted upon them by Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xv. 29).

Though the details are uncertain, it will be seen that the present heading is misleading. Some of Hosea's prophecies may fall in the reign of Jotham, king of Judah, who, according to Duncker's chronology—which partly corrects the rough Biblical approximation by the Assyrian inscriptions—reigned B.C. 740–734. He was, therefore, contemporary with Menahem (748), Pekahiah (738), and Pekah (736). Ahaz was contemporary with part of Hoshea's reign (734–722). But that Hosea could have prophesied during any part of the reign of *Hezekiah* (B.C. 728–697) is inconceivable, not because it will give the inordinate range of some sixty-two years to his prophecies, but because there is not a line in his extant prophecies which is not discordant with the state of things in the Northern Kingdom after the Fall of Samaria.

And this is a convenient place at which to call attention to the certainty that the biblical chronology of the Kings is merely given in round numbers. It consists mainly of multiples of twenty. No exactitude is aimed at; no materials existed for

[1] Apparently a name of scorn for Bethel, which probably originated with Amos.

[2] These five divisions are the arrangement adopted by Ewald ("Prophets of Israel"), and by Volck, in Herzog's "Cyclopædia."

[3] Comp. v. 13, 14; vii. 11, 12; viii. 9, 10; xii. 1.

it. The vague date of Amos, "two years after the earthquake," shows that in his days the Hebrews still reckoned in the most primitive manner. The Assyrian chronology was much more accurate and careful.

Two facts decisively show that the system of Archbishop Ussher, based on the attempt to synchronise the data given for the two lines of kings in Judah and Israel is not tenable.

1. The first proof is that the synchronism can only be brought about by arbitrary hypotheses. For if we add together the periods in the two kingdoms which are said to be contemporary we find that twenty more years are assigned to the kings of Judah than to the parallel kings of Israel for the same period: in other words, the southern chronology from Rehoboam to the Fall of Samaria (in the sixth year of Hezekiah—2 Kings xviii. 9, 10) is twenty years longer than the northern chronology from Jeroboam I. to the Fall of Samaria. This discrepancy can only be got over (1) by altering the text (as was done by George Smith) in such a way as to make Jeroboam II. reign fifty-one instead of forty-one years, and Pekah reign thirty years instead of twenty; or (2) by inventing an interregnum of eleven years between Jeroboam II. and his son Zechariah, and a period of nine years' anarchy before King Hoshea. As there is not a shadow of textual or Biblical authority for these Procrustean processes it is clear that as it stands the chronology is only general, and to a certain extent conjectural.[1]

2. And the second proof of the artificial character of the data in the Book of Kings is their symmetrical arrangement. When Niebuhr examined the legendary chronology of the early kings of Rome, its purely hypothetical character was obvious when he saw that the middle year of the entire period coincided with the middle year of the middle king. Such coincidences never occur in real history. They are as clear a proof of invention or modification as an isolated footstep on the sand is a proof that a human being has been there. Now the Biblical

[1] Of Ussher's system, Prebendary Huxtable says ("Speaker's Commentary," vi. 399): "The chronology given in the margin of our A.V. rests for the most part upon numerical statements in our present Hebrew text, which are themselves, in several instances, incapable of being reconciled with one another without the aid of various conjectures either of interregnums, or of co-regnums, or of repeated accessions, for which there is no evidence except those convenient for this purpose, and it has now become, in a serious degree, discredited by the records of Assyrian history.

chronology, as Professor Robertson Smith has pointed out, has exactly this stamp of system. The Judæan chronicler gives exactly 480 (=12×40) years from the Exodus to the foundation of Solomon's Temple, and 480 years from the founding of the Temple to the return from the Exile (B.C. 535).[1] And not only does he give exactly half this period—240 years—for the duration of the Northern Kingdom, but also divides the history of the north into three exact periods of 80 years, of which the second begins with the Syrian wars in the fourth year of Ahab, and coincides with their duration. There can be little doubt that the chronological data were conjecturally added by the editors after the return from the Exile, from which year (B.C. 535) they reckoned backward.[2]

The Assyrian records, as Schrader points out in his book on the Cuneiform Inscriptions, seem to lead to two conclusions: (1) First, that Jehu paid tribute to Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, as far back as B.C. 842,[3] which shows that Assyria must have emerged on the horizon of prophetic insight much earlier than has commonly been supposed; and that Menahem again paid tribute 104 years later, B.C. 738. (2) And secondly, that there was no interregnum between Jeroboam II. and the six months' reign of his son Zechariah; but that the destruction, already prophesied by Amos and Hosea, instead of being delayed for sixty years, really took place not more than thirty years after the date of their prophecies.[4]

[1] The absence of this datum from 2 Kings vi. 1 in the LXX. shows, perhaps, that it was post-exilic.

[2] See this more clearly and fully stated by Dr. Robertson Smith, "Prophets of Israel," 144–153, who partly follows Nöldeke and Wellhausen. He first points out the tri-section of Israelitish history into three periods of eighty years in the "Journal of Philology," x. 209 *seq.* The synchronisms of the two lines of kings are evidently added (and with various discrepancies and hiatuses) by a later hand. Wellhausen has further shown that, in some instances, they have been so inserted as to disturb the natural construction of the sentence.

[3] The name of "Jahua, son of Chumri," occurs on an obelisk of Shalmaneser II., and he is represented as giving tribute in cups, vases, lead, and ingots of gold and silver (see Schrader, "Die Keilinschr.," 208–224; Duncker's "Hist. of Ant." ii.).

[4] The date of the *actual fall* of Samaria is still uncertain; but as the siege was begun by Shalmaneser and ended by Sargon, it probably took place about 722, when that king came to the throne. We may, perhaps, infer

If it be asked whether the Assyrian inscriptions may not have been falsified and exaggerated by the vanity of conquerors; we answer that, besides seven copies of the Assyrian canon of Eponyms, we possess records which were actually contemporary with the reigns of the monarchs. They might sometimes exaggerate; but they could hardly lie. That they should slur over a disaster is not unnatural; but they would not invent a victory.

Returning to the heading of Hosea's prophecy, we may observe that though the prophet is always called Hosea,[1] and the king Hoshea, yet the two names are precisely the same, and are indeed identical with that borne by Joshua in his earlier days.[2] Apart from a few valueless legends, no facts of his biography have been preserved except such as we learn from himself. Of his father Beeri[3] nothing is known. The Rabbis assert that whenever any prophet's *father* is named in Scripture, the father also was a prophet. They even go so far as to attribute to Beeri the authorship of Isa. viii. 19, 20; but there is not the least ground for such a conjecture. They also identify him with the Beerah of 1 Chron. v. 6, who is mentioned as a prince of Reuben, captured by Tiglath-Pileser. The unknown writers of the traditions of the Prophets, assigned to Epiphanius and Dorotheus, say that Hosea was born at Belemoth in Issachar, which Jerome identifies with the Beth-shemesh of Josh. xix. 22.

That Hosea was a northerner is certain from the whole tenor of his prophecy. He was not the earliest of the Northern prophets, for he had been preceded by Samuel, Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, and others; but he is the earliest northerner whose prophecies are preserved, and he is also the last. His allusions to Judah are secondary and incidental. The day of Judah's visitation had not yet come, and there was a hope of her ultimate deliverance.[4] Hosea is not indeed without deep apprehension that she too may be corrupted by the fatal example of her sister Ephraim, and as time went on he

from 2 Kings xvii. 4–6, and from Hosea x. 7, that Hoshea was defeated and taken captive *before* the siege.

[1] הוֹשֵׁעַ The form Hosea, like the *Osee* of Rom. ix. 24, comes from the LXX Ὡσηέ and the Vulgate.

[2] 2 Kings xv. 30; Num. xiii. 8, 16; Deut. xxxii. 44.

[3] The name occurs Gen. xxvi. 34.

[4] Hosea i. 7; iv. 15.

came to the sorrowful conviction of her deepening apostasy and inevitable fall.[1] But while he deplores the schism which had rent the two kingdoms asunder,[2] and looks ultimately to a Messiah of the House of David,[3] and speaks with scorn and hatred of the cherubic symbols at Dan and Bethel, which he calls "calves;"[4] yet he is a northerner in heart. His images and turns of expression seem sometimes to be influenced by the Canticles, an exquisite idyll of pure love which originated in the Ten Tribes. His whole soul yearns for his native country with an infinite tenderness. The towns and places to which he refers—Mizpeh, Gilead, Tabor, Bethel, Gilgal, Shechem,[5] Samaria, Jezreel, and Lebanon—are all connected with the land which he tenderly calls "Ephraim," after the beloved son of Joseph. Patriotism was never more passionate than that which breathes through every line of this Jeremiah of the North.

And yet his patriotism leads him to no illusions. He looks to the very depth of the heart of his country and sees that it is in a state of corruption which can only end in dissolution. The view which Amos formed of the condition of Israel is the view taken by a casual stranger, and dwells only on obvious phenomena. But Hosea speaks with all the knowledge of a man whose lifelong home has been in the country which he describes. Like Amos, he dwells on the outward and glaring forms of evil; but he probes more deeply than his predecessor into the causes from which they spring, and details more precisely the forms which they assume. Even in the powerful rule of Jeroboam II. he is only able to see a godless militarism, founded upon massacre.[6] But when Jeroboam was dead, and in the ensuing anarchy when the elemental passions of human nature surged over the petty barriers opposed to them by rival usurpers,[7] he felt more and more that it had become his unhappy lot to be the prophet of the decadence and overthrow of

[1] iv. 15, v. 6, 10-14; vi. 11; viii. 14; x. 11; xii. 1–3. The indications derived by Ewald from v. 8 and from the use of "there" in vi. 7, 10; ix. 15, that Hosea was actually writing at the time in the Southern Kingdom, are too slight to be relied upon.

[2] iii. 4; vii. 5–7; viii. 4, &c. [3] iii. 6. [4] viii. 5, 6, and *passim*.

[5] In vi. 9, the words rendered in the A.V. "by consent" should be as in the R.V., "towards Shechem," and the prophet's allusion to the disgrace of that locality by the robber bands organized by priests, shows an intimate knowledge of the state of affairs.

[6] i. 4. [7] 2 Kings xv. 8–20.

the land he loved. King succeeded king, and dynasty dynasty with horrible rapidity. As in the days of the Barrack-Emperors of falling Rome, the purple was a sure mark for the dagger-thrust, and "blood touched blood" on the slippery footsteps of the throne.[1] Universal confusion followed. There was no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; there was nothing but swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, which called for an immediate and ravaging retribution.[2] Page after page of the prophet rings with denunciations of drunkenness, robbery, and whoredom. One vile scene in particular, which he describes with an evident sense of anguish, may stand for a picture of the evils which were eating like a cancer into the afflicted kingdom. It was a scene which had taken place in Samaria, in which a band of infamous revellers had at first degraded the king by their incitements to drink, and then, seizing their opportunity, had murdered the boon-companion whom they had first morally destroyed. It reads like a scene from the assassination of a Commodus or an Elagabalus—

"They make the king glad with their wickedness,
And the princes with their lies.
They are all adulterers;
They are an oven heated by the baker;
He (only) ceases to stir the fire between the kneading of the dough and its fermenting.
On the day of our king the princes are sick with the fever of wine;
He (the king) stretched out his hand with scorners.
Yea, almost like the oven have they made their heart in their intrigue.
All night slept their baker,[3]
In the morning the oven burneth as a flaming fire.
They all glow as an oven;
They have devoured their judges;
All their kings are fallen!
Not one of them calleth upon me."[4]

The allusions are naturally somewhat vague, and the style has the element of difficulty and uncertainty of text which is found frequently in this Book; but no one can mistake the terrible force of the metaphor. We see here a drunken king amid his drunken princes, ignorant of his peril,

[1] iv. 2. [2] iv. 2–3.
[3] Another reading is "their *anger*," Targum and Peshito.
[4] Hosea vii. 3–7.

though he is surrounded by wicked plotters who have gained his confidence by flattering his vices. Thus the subjects aid and abet the rulers in their abominations; a general demoralization prevails; all are constantly blazing with passion and infamy like an oven; and as the baker only rests from heating during the few hours of the night between the kneading of the dough and its fermenting, so they rest from inflaming their burning passions of lust and violence no longer than is necessary for the acquirement of new powers, their whole business being the perpetual indulgence of their desires. The king exchanges intimacy with men totally corrupt, and behind the wine-sick fever-heat of the banquet they are plotting to kill him. Their oven and the passion which heats it, only sleeps till the moment when their treachery can be successful, but by the dawn it blazes into the crime of murder. This is the career of such princes and such subjects; and thus have their kings fallen by assassination; while yet not one among them seeks the true salvation.[1]

"Like princes, like people;" but also alas! "like people, like priests,"—a proverb which has acquired currency from its fatal truth, but which Hosea originated.[2] The causes for the wide-spread immorality were twofold, as Hosea, resident perhaps in Samaria, saw more clearly and pointed out more definitely than Amos. They were:

1. The detestable vileness and hypocrisy of the priests, with whom, as usual, the false prophets were in league. From Hosea, the earliest of the northern prophets whose works are extant, to Malachi the latest prophet of the returned exiles, the priests had very little right to be proud of their title. Their pretensions were, for the most part, in inverse proportion to their merits. The neutrality, or the direct wickedness, of the religious teachers of a country, torpid in callous indifference and stereotyped in false traditions, is always the worst sign of a nation's decadence. Hosea was no exception to the rule that the true teacher must be prepared to bear the beatitude of malediction, and not least from those who ought to share his responsibilities. Amos had found by experience that for any man who desired a reputation for worldly

[1] Ewald, "Prophets of Israel," i. 268. Four kings were murdered in forty years. [2] iv. 9.

prudence, the wisest rule was to hold his tongue;[1] but Hosea, for whom there was no escape from his native land, nothing remained but to bear the reproach that "the prophet is a fool, and the spiritual man is mad," uttered by men full of iniquitv and hatred. A fowler's snare was laid for him in all his ways, and he found nothing but enmity in the house of his God.[2] The priests suffered the people to perish for lack of knowledge. They set their hearts on their iniquity, and contentedly connived at, if they did not directly foster, the sinfulness of the people, which at any rate secured them an abundance of sin-offerings. So far had they apostatized from their functions as moral teachers.[3] And there was worse behind. They were active fomenters of evil; they were as "a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread on Tabor."[4] Two other places—Gilead and Shechem—were rendered infamous by their enormities. Bloody foot-prints marked the soil, and "as bandits lying in wait, (so doth) the company of priests: they murder on the road towards Shechem; yea, they commit outrages."[5] The places were sanctuaries, and the very priests who should have done their utmost to secure the safety of the pilgrims, actually joined with the depredators, and murdered, perhaps, the innocent homicides who fled to Shechem, which was a city of refuge.

But the second cause of the national apostasy lay deeper still. It was:

2. The corruption of worship and religion at its source.

The "calf-worship," was now beginning to produce its natural fruit. It would have indignantly disclaimed the stigma of idolatry. It was represented as "image-worship," the adoration of cherubic symbols, which were *in themselves* regarded as being so little a violation of the Second Commandment that they were consecrated even in the Temple at Jerusalem. The centralization of worship, it must be borne in mind, was a new thing. Local sanctuaries and local altars had been sanctioned by kings, and used by prophets for time immemorial. The worship at Dan and Bethel could have claimed to be, in the fullest sense of the word, a worship of Jehovah, as legitimate, as national, and as ancient as that at Jerusalem. For the

[1] Amos v. 13. [2] ix. 7, 8. [3] iv. 6–8; comp. Isa. ix. 16.
[4] v. 2. The next verse is obscure, and probably the text is corrupt. It may mean "And the revolters are profuse in murders, but I am a rebuke to them all." [5] vi. 8, 9. Cheyne, "Hosea," p. 80.

ox was the most distinctive emblem of the cherub, and even in the wilderness, cherubs—possibly winged oxen—had bent over the mercy-seat, and been woven on the curtains, and in the Temple of Solomon had been embossed upon the walls, and formed the support of the great brazen laver. Jeroboam I. might have plausibly argued that he had a right to set them up for political reasons in his own kingdom. He would have found plenty of priests to assure him that such symbols were edifying, and aided the devotions of the people. Nevertheless, Jeroboam had been warned from the first by the word of prophecy that he was doing wrong, and had given no heed to the warning. It is true that we read of no protest against this symbolism either by Elijah, Elisha, or Jonah. Even Amos, of the Southern Kingdom, only indirectly discountenances it. But Hosea could more truly estimate its effects, and he judged it by its fruits. He saw the fatal facility with which the title "Baal," "Lord," might be transferred from the Lord of lords to the heathen Baalim. He saw how readily the emblem of Jehovah might be identified with the idol of Phœnicia. The alliance of Ahab with Jezebel, a daughter of the usurper Ethbaal of Tyre, who had been a priest of Astarte, and the rapid diffusion of undisguised Baal-worship, among all but 7,000 in Israel had opened the eyes of the faithful to the peril of this great abuse. Jehovah-worship was perverted into nature-worship, and the coarse emblems of Asherah and Ashtoreth smoothed the way for a cultus of which the basis was open sensuality. The festal dances of Israelites in honour of God, which were as old as the days of the Judges,[1] became polluted with all the abominations of the Phœnician worship. The "adultery" and "whoredom," which are denounced so incessantly on the page of Hosea, are not only the metaphors for idolatry, but the literal description of the lives which that idolatry corrupted.

Thus, then, Hosea found himself surrounded with "the barbarous dissonance of Bacchus and his revellers," and he could not suffer his voice to fall mute—

> "Tho' fallen on evil times,
> On evil times tho' fallen, and evil tongues,
> In darkness, and with dangers circled round
> And solitude."

It is sometimes the glorious mission of prophet and statesman

[1] Judges xxi. 21.

to kindle the ardour of a generous courage; like Tyrtaeus who roused the Spartans to resist; like Demosthenes, who encouraged Athens to confront Philip of Macedon; like Chatham, "bidding England be of good cheer and hurl defiance at her foes"; and Pitt, in the struggle against Napoleon, pouring forth "the indomitable language of courage and of hope." Such was the part which, a generation later, fell to the lot of Isaiah, who taught Jerusalem to say to the mighty king of Assyria, "The virgin, the daughter of Sion, hath despised thee . . . the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee." To others has fallen the far more trying and melancholy duty of counselling submission, of saying that even the time for repentance is almost past, of denouncing an inevitable doom. Such was the function of Phocion after the battle of Chaeroneia, of Hannibal after Zama; of Thiers after Sedan; and, in Jewish history, such was the work of Hosea in the Northern, and Jeremiah in the Southern Kingdom. But this Cassandra-voice of prophecy was isolated, and spoke in vain, and involved the braving of much hatred and bitter opposition. Such was the fate which Hosea had to endure nearly all his life long, and it has left its traces on his melancholy page. He knew what it was to be derided as a madman, and despised as a fool.[1]

No further particulars respecting him are known, except his relations to Gomer bath Diblaim, of which we shall speak later on. Christian tradition, as represented by Pseudo-Epiphanius and others, says that he was carried captive to Babylon, where he died, but that his body was brought back to Palestine and buried at Safed, where his grave was shown. Another tomb of the Neby Osha is shown east of the Jordan, near Es-Salt.[2]

But part of the deep interest which attaches to Hosea lies in the fact that he is "the only prophet of the Northern Kingdom who has left any written prophecy." There must have been vigorous life in this little State which called forth the energy of such prophets as Elijah, Elisha, and Jonah, and of such kings as Jeroboam II. and Pekah; and which also produced literature so striking as the Song of Deborah, the Prophecy of Hosea, and the Song of Songs. But its fertility and prosperity led to nature-worship and dissoluteness, and fostered the germs of its premature decay—the grey hairs which were sprinkled upon Ephraim, and he knew it not (vii. 9).

[1] Hosea ix. 7.

[2] For the legends about him, see Knobel, "Prophetismus," ii. 154.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA.

Hosea obscure in outline—His style—His allusions to nature and to history—His *paronomasias*—References to him in the New Testament—His theology—The book of his prophecies—1. Accusations against Israel—2. More special accusations—3. The punishment—4. Retrospect, denunciation, consolation—Wrong lines of interpretation—5. Final retrospect and conclusion—The tone and colour of his prophecies explained by his personal experiences—Autobiography involved in the three first chapters. The lesson which Hosea had learnt.

The Book of Hosea presents no such distinct articulations as those which mark the framework of the Book of Amos. It falls into two main divisions. Of these, the three first chapters stand apart from the rest, though they colour the whole book with their imagery and emotions. They explain to us the style of the prophet, and why he was the manner of man he was.

But the remaining chapters (iv.–xiv.) fall into a division by themselves, and contain the sum and substance of the prophet's utterances. We will, therefore, consider them first, and return afterwards to the personal narrative.

No prophet is so obscure in outline as Hosea. He has pauses and divisions, but they are little discernible. The burden of each separate strophe closely resembles that of the others, though the illustrations and expressions may be different. In all of them there is an intermingling of rebuke and appeal, of pity and indignation, of despair and hope. Every observer has noticed this almost incoherent character of his style, and the tragic pathos by which it is marked. "*Commaticus est in genere dicendi*," says Jerome, "et quasi per sententias loquens," in other words, his sentences are short and broken, and, so to speak, quivering. He is rapid, ejaculatory, epigrammatic, "a man of emotion rather than of logic, a poet rather than a

preacher." Bishop Lowth compares his separate poems to scattered leaves of the Sibyl. "Each verse," says Dr. Pusey, "forms a whole for itself, like one heavy toll in a funeral knell. The characteristic of his poetic oratory is lyrical." "Exhaustless is the sorrow," says Ewald, "endless the grief wherever his mind turns, and ever and anon the tossing, restless discourse begins again, like the wild cry of an anguish which can hardly be mastered." "Parallelism," says Canon Cheyne, "which is elsewhere so prominent in poetical and rhetorical language, and which is often so great a help to the interpreter, is here but feebly represented. Hosea's rhythm is the artless rhythm of sobs and sighs."[1] His style is to the poetry of other prophets what that of the Epistle to the Galatians is to the calmer style of St. Paul's other letters.

He had been influenced in all probability by the Book of Amos,[2] as well as by the Song of Songs.[3] His similes are largely drawn from nature—from the lion (v. 14; xiii. 7), the panther (xiii. 7), the bear (xiii. 8), the dove (xi. 11), the fluttering moth (v. 12), the lily (xiv. 5), the fir-trees of Lebanon (xiv. 8), the latter rain (vi. 3), the evening dew (xiv. 5). With the history of Israel in its broad outlines he was well acquainted. He alludes to Abraham (i. 10), the story of Jacob (xii. 3, 4, 12; xiii. 15), with particulars unknown to the writer of Genesis; to the destruction of Admah and Zeboim (xi. 8), to the Exodus (ii. 15, xi. 1; xii. 9), to the wanderings in the wilderness (ii. 3; xiii. 5); to the valley of Achor in which Achan perished (ii. 15), to the sin of Israel in following Baal-Peor (ix. 10), to the shocking atrocity committed at Gibeah (ix. 9; x. 9), and to the choice of Saul as king (xiii. 10, 11).[4] That he had read the Pentateuch as we have it cannot be proved, nor can it be

[1] In Hosea the parallelism is neither regular nor continuous, as is observed by Dr. W. Robertson Smith. Renan says ("Hist. du peuple d'Israel," ii. 421): "Le style de ces morceaux n'était ni celui du *Sir* ni celui du *Masal*, encore moins la prose ordinaire. C'était quelque chose de sonore et de cadencé, des phrases rhythmées, sans parallelisme rigoreux, mais avec des retombées périodiques, des séries d'images vives, frappant à coups redoublés."

[2] Compare Amos i. 2, 4, 5; v. 5 with Hos. xi. 10; viii. 14; iv. 15; x. 5, 8, &c. Also compare Hos. iv. 3 with Amos v. 16; viii. 8; Hos. viii. 13, 14 with Amos v. 22; viii. 7; ii. 5.

[3] xiv. 6–9.

[4] On the allusions of Hosea to events recorded in the Pentateuch, see Curtis's "Levitical Priests," 175–181.

entirely disproved. If he was acquainted with its strict monotheism, it is a matter for surprise that in iii. 4 he seems to reckon among religious privileges the pillars (*matzeboth*), and a plated image (if that be there the meaning of "ephod"),[1] and the *teraphim*, which were a kind of Lares and Penates in the form of likenesses of ancestors and household gods.[2]

The expressions of Hosea have in them a certain penetrative quality which gave them a permanent influence over subsequent writers. Isaiah (i. 23) borrowed from him at least one paronomasia—the play of words between *sarim* "princes," and *sorerim* "revolters" (ix. 15); some of his phrases are adopted by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah; and his standing metaphor of Israel as the spouse or bride of Jehovah became indigenous in all Hebrew literature, even down to the days of the Rabbis.

The quotations from, and allusions to, Hosea in the New Testament are numerous and important.

1. First and foremost of these stand the memorable words, "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice" (vi. 6). Well might our Lord say to the Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth."[3] For the Hebrew words mean that God values mercy—*Khesed*, dutiful love, piety, love to God and to man shown in the habit of the life—far more than rituals and ceremonies, and all forms of external service. Other prophets insisted on the same great truth, to a nation which, in course of time, was eaten up with empty formalism.[4] The verse contains the secret of real religion as opposed to futile religionism, and therefore our Lord quoted it twice in order to give to it His most emphatic sanction.[5]

[1] As some understand it to be in Judg. xvii., xviii; 1 Sam. xxi. 9; xxiii. 6; xxx. 7, 8.

[2] See the writer's article on "Teraphim" in Kitto's "Cyclopædia of the Bible." This passage *may*, however, imply that Israel should have *no* means of any sort of religious worship, or means of trying to ascertain the will of heaven, whether legitimate or unlawful. For other interesting allusions of Hosea to the internal condition of Israel see iii. 4; viii. 12; x. 1; xi. 2; xii. 11; xiii. 1.

[3] In these paragraphs I have made much use of the excellent introduction of Canon Cheyne ("Cambridge Bible for Schools").

[4] Isa. i. 11-20; Micah vi. 6-8; Jer. vii. 22, 23.

[5] Matt. ix. 13; xii. 7. Cheyne quotes a parallel from Beal's texts of the Buddhist canon in which Buddha is made to say that if a man lived a hundred years, and continually offered elephants and horses, all this is not

2. St. Paul, in Romans ix. 25, 26, makes a fine application of the names, Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi, which the prophet gave to his children (i. 10; ii. 1, 23) to which St. Peter also makes an evident allusion (1 Pet. ii. 10).[1]

3. Our Lord also refers (Luke xxiii. 30), as does St. John in the Apocalypse (Rev. vi. 16; ix. 6) to Hosea's powerful metaphor of terror, "they shall say to the mountain, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us" (Hos. x. 8).

4. St. Matthew applies Hos. xi. 1, "When Israel was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt," to the return of Mary and Joseph with the child Jesus to Palestine after their flight into Egypt. That there is no direct or conscious *prediction* in Hosea's words is obvious. It would be absurd to quote such an allusion from an historic retrospect as though it could for a moment be accepted as a prophetic intimation. It belongs not to prophecy, but to typology; to those preordained analogies by which the lives of individual saints and patriarchs of the Old Testament, and the whole life of Israel as a nation, were typical of Him who was their promised Messiah. Evidentially valueless it is spiritually significant.

5. One more New Testament quotation from, or free allusion to, Hosea occurs in the grand passage of St. Paul, on the Resurrection from the dead—

> "O death, I will be thy plagues;
> O grave, I will be thy destruction."[2]

In proceeding to examine the chapters which form the main divisions of Hosea's prophecy, we shall be struck with the manner in which they pass from menaces of doom to promises of mercy. This peculiarity also of his style belongs to the man himself and his tragical experience. Meanwhile let us notice that "in this intimate and oftentimes absolutely immediate blending of the fire of Divine righteousness with the light of eternal love we find the proper and peculiar focus of Hosea's spirit."[3] If Amos is predominantly the preacher of God's

equal to one act of pure love in saving life. The truth enunciated is not beyond the light of that spirit of man, which is the candle of the Lord.

[1] Compare also Hosea ii. 23 with Gal. iv. 27.

[2] Hos. xiii. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 55.

[3] Umbreit. Among special commentaries on Hosea may be mentioned those of Wünsche (1868), Nowack (1880), and Cheyne (1884).

awfulness and majesty, it is the glory of Hosea to be the early herald of God's love.

Let us now follow the loose divisions so far as they can be made out. They will at least serve as a general guide to the contents and meaning of this difficult prophet, whose brevity renders his meaning frequently obscure, and to us sometimes undecipherable.

1. ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL (iv. 1–19).

Jehovah has a contention with Israel because faithfulness and love and knowledge of God have disappeared, and perjury, lies, murder, theft, adultery, and violence prevail. Therefore a universal curse shall fall on the land, and shall involve even the prophet and the priest (iv. 1–5).

And the priests are specially guilty since the people are perishing for lack of knowledge, and the priests rather encourage than check their iniquity (6–10).

Idolatry is the cause of this moral decadence. Whoredom and drunkenness follow the worship of stocks and staves. Such idolatry of nature-goddesses is a mere consecration of impurity. The white poplars and the terebinths dedicated to idols overshadow the vileness of their worshippers, in which vileness the old are even more guilty than the young. Therefore let Judah take warning that *she* too does not fall into the apostasies of Gilgal and Beth-Aven (11–15).[1]

Israel which should have been a lamb in God's pasture has become as a stubborn cow. All ranks are drunken and shameless, especially the "shields," *i.e.*, the princes. The wind shall sweep away both them and their sacrifices (16–19).

2. FRESH AND MORE SPECIAL ACCUSATIONS (v. 1–vi. 11).

The king, the priests, and the princes who have been as snares and nets on the high places[2] are specially warned; and Judah, whose deeds are known to God no less than those of Israel (1–5).

Of what avail are mere sacrifices when marred by treachery?[3]

[1] Beth-Aven, "House of Sin or Vanity," no longer deserving to be called Beth-El, "House of God." Comp. Amos v. 5.

[2] Mizpah on the east, and Tabor on the west of Jordan, are mentioned as two special strongholds.

[3] In v. 7 the phrase "now shall a month" (or "the new moon") devour them "with their portions," is obscure. It may allude to idolatrous profanation of the new moons.

Blow a trumpet-note of alarm to Ephraim and to Judah because they remove the landmarks between right and wrong (6–10).[1]

And while they continue to worship Asherahs—mere wooden posts—corruption inevitably continues to work. They try to avert it by appealing to the warlike king of Assyria to help them.[2] In vain. God should rend them like a lion,[3] till in their agony they returned to Him (11–15).

Then the people will utter a cry of penitence to Jehovah for His mercy! But since their repentance is evanescent as the morning dew, God must deal with them by His prophets and the judgments which follow their words (vi. 1–5).[4]

For what God requires is mercy, not sacrifice; knowledge of Him, not burnt-offerings. "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant."[5] Of what use is external service while the streets of Gilead are foot-tracked with blood, and the priests act as brigands on the road to Sichem?[6] Ephraim is defiled and has infected Judah (6–11).

3. THE PUNISHMENT (vii. 1–ix. 9).

Does Ephraim think that God is blind to, or oblivious of, his guilt? And that, too, when scenes so shameful could be enacted as a drunken king murdered by the subjects who had

[1] Judah is referred to with unusual frequency in these two chapters. "After thee, O Benjamin" (v. 8; comp. Judg. v. 14), seems to mean "Look behind thee!" or, "the enemy is behind thee." Hosea's references to Jerusalem are distant and delicate.

[2] "They sent to King Jareb," *i.e.*, to "King Combat" (or possibly "to the king that shall plead;" comp. Judg. vi. 32), not as in A.V., "to the king *of* Jareb." There is no such name as Jareb among the kings of Assyria, but the name "Combat" represents the ideal of them all. The special allusion is perhaps to Shalmaneser III. (see note on x. 14), or to Assur-dan-ilu, or to Pul (Tiglath-Pileser), 2 Kings xv. 19. Neither Schrader ("Cuneiform Inscriptions"), Rawlinson, nor any other authority can form a certain conclusion on the subject.

[3] See G. Smith, "Assyr. Eponym Canon," 125, for Sargon's description of the capture of Samaria. He claims to have taken 27,290 captives.

[4] vi. 2, "After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up," is a proverbial expression.

[5] This seems to be the true rendering of vi. 7, and gives us a very interesting allusion. Comp. Job xxxi. 33.

[6] If Gilead means Ramoth-Gilead, the fact that it was a "city of refuge" (Deut. iv. 43) adds to the horror. See Ellicott's Commentary, *ad loc.* The Gileadites were famed for deeds of blood (see 2 Kings xv. 25, where fifty of them aid Pekah in the murder of Pekahiah).

fostered his degradation? This was why there had been such a massacre of kings (vii. 1–7).[1]

And the external state of the kingdom is as wretched as the internal. The nation was fluttering like a senseless dove, now towards Egypt, now towards Assyria.[2] God had made them strong of old; He was still ready to redeem them, but they started aside like a broken bow. Therefore their princes should fall by the sword (vii. 8–16).

So then—the trumpet to the lips and proclaim the doom of a kingdom founded in rebellion and devoted to mere calf-worship![3] They have sown the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind, and their calf shall be broken to pieces (viii. 1–7).

Neglecting the words of prophets, seeking for foreign and idolatrous alliances, falling into brutal customs—such as eating the raw flesh of the sacrifices—they shall go back into Egypt! Their history shall be reversed and rolled back to its primitive origin in a degraded serfdom.[4] Vain their fortresses and cities—they shall be burnt, and those of Judah also (9–14).[5]

They may rejoice in their heathenish harvest festivals, but they shall be exiles in the unclean lands of Egypt and Assyria, they shall be buried in Memphis.[6] They drive their prophets into madness, and lie in wait for them.[7] Their state is as hor-

[1] This is a passage of exceptional energy. See *supra*. In the history of Israel, Nadab, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Jehoram, Zachariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah, were all murdered, and as Dr. Pusey observes, except in the House of Omri, all the kings of Israel either left no sons or left them to be slain.

[2] This describes the wavering policy of King Hoshea and his advisers. He became king after the murder of Pekah by bribing the Assyrians, and after Tiglath-Pileser's death he intrigued with Egypt (2 Kings xvii. 4).

[3] In viii. 5, "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast *thee* off," is a doubtful rendering. The "thee" is absent from the Hebrew. The R.V. has "He hath cast off thy calf, O Samaria." The "them" in the next clause refers to the *two* calves.

[4] viii. 12, "I have written to him the great things of my law," has been quoted in proof of the ancientness of parts of the Pentateuch. But the translation is not certain. The R.V. has, "*though* I wrote for him." v. Orelli, "*Mochte ich ihm eine Unzahl meiner Gesetze aufschreiben.*"

[5] Sennacherib boasts to have taken forty-six of Hezekiah's fenced cities, some of which had been built by Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 10) and Jotham (Ibid. xxvii. 4). He says, "I attacked them with fire, with carnage, with fightings, with my engines of war. I took them, I occupied them."

[6] Probably many exiles from the Northern Kingdom fled to Egypt (comp. id. 11), though there was no real Egyptian *captivity* (see xi. 5).

[7] The meaning is uncertain, but comp. 2 Kings ix. 11, Jer. xxix. 26. The

rible as in the old vile guilty days of Gibeah. Therefore nothing is before them but gloom and desolation (ix. 1–9).

4. MINGLED RETROSPECT, DENUNCIATION, AND CONSOLATION (ix. 10–xi. 11).

The day had been when Israel was lovely and delightsome as grapes in the wilderness, as figs early ripe. Yet even in early days they fell away to Baal-Peor and Astarte. The curse of sterility shall fall upon them,[1] and perhaps it is for this that the prophet should pray. But God's answer is that their idolatry at Gilgal and the crimes of their princes are such that God cannot but hate them. There is a canker at the root of their natural life. They must be in part exterminated, in part wanderers among the nations (ix. 10–17).

The apostasy of Israel did but deepen with his prosperity, and has ended in anarchy and godlessness. Therefore retribution shall grow rank as a weed in their furrows. They and their calf-idols shall come to shame and be carried to "King Combat" (Jareb) of Assyria. Their people and priests shall mourn.[2] Their king shall disappear like foam upon the water;[3] their sanctuary shall be shattered, and thorn and thistle shall grow upon their altars, till in their anguish they call on the mountains to cover them, and on the hills to fall on them (x. 1–8).

From the days of Gibeah has Israel sinned, and therefore both Ephraim and Judah shall be treated as stubborn heifers, and made to bear the yoke.[4] Yet even now a better seedtime might produce a better harvest, and if they sought the Lord He would even yet rain righteousness upon them. But since they have plowed wickedness they must reap oppression; the more they trusted in chariots and warriors, the roar of an advancing

words (ver. 8), "Ephraim was a watchman with my God" (R.V.) may mean "watcheth *against* God" (Ibid. *marg.*); or reading *am* for *im*, "Ephraim, the people of my God, is a lier in wait."

[1] Though "Ephraim" means "fruitful," or perhaps "double fruitfulness." See Gen. xli. 52, xlviii. 19, xlix. 25; Deut. xxxiii. 17.

[2] *Kemarim* implying that the calf-priests were idol-priests.

[3] The word rendered "foam" may mean "bubble" or "chip." The historic allusion seems to imply that Hoshea was summoned into the presence of Shalmaneser III. in Damascus, and never heard of again.

[4] In x. 10, for "the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves *in their two furrows*" (A.V.), read as in the marg. and R.V., "when they are yoked to their *two transgressions*," *i.e.*, the two calves.

army should be heard, and their fortresses be shattered as when Shalman stormed Betharbel, and dashed in pieces mothers with their children. Such, too, should be the fate of Bethel, and before the dawn was red the king of Israel should perish (x. 9–15).[1]

Again the prophet reverts to the days of Israel's youth in tender retrospect. How had God loved Israel in his youth when He called him out of Egypt![2] But they had neglected the call of the prophets and served the Baalim, though God had taught Ephraim to walk, and drawn him with cords of love. He would not return to God, therefore he should return to Egypt and be a vassal to the king of Assyria. The sword should whirl in his cities and destroy his defences; for though called to incline to God, he declined from God; and bidden to strive upwards, he strove not upwards (xi. 1–7).

Thus for many strophes, with but few gleams of alleviation, the prophet has filled his message with gloom and menace. It might well seem as if the fiat pronounced was deliberate and irrevocable. Here and there a word of promise and of tenderness has been incidentally implied, but on the whole it has been declared that God cannot alter His decree of annihilation or hopeless exile against a people so thankless and so guilty. Yet the secret of God's ultimate dealings is in His love, not in His anger. Such love cannot come to nothing like a river lost in mud and sand. "Amidst the ashes of destroyed prejudices, of vanquished sins, there glimmers in secrecy the eternal love, and the more the evil presentiment of annihilation for this community makes itself felt, with the greater necessity and energy must this love revolt from it, since the community had been destined for better things. Thus in the fifth and last strophe the direct antithesis forces itself forward, and with inexpressible ardour the bright side of the Divine intention shines forth, scattering all that is still dark from the previous gloomy forebodings. The true community shall NOT be annihilated by any such chastisements, but purified and perfected. Jehovah's chastisements present

[1] In ver. 15 the meaning perhaps is, as in the marg. of the R.V., "So shall it be done unto you at Bethel."

[2] St. Matthew applies these words in ii. 15, "not," as Dr. Pusey says, "to prove anything, but to point out the relation of God's former dealings to the latter, the beginning and the close, what relates to the body and what relates to the head.

externally the appearance of anger and destruction, but within they are nothing but love and salvation."[1]

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?
How shall I surrender thee, Israel?
How shall I make thee as Admah?
How shall I treat thee as Zeboim?
Mine heart is turned within me;
I am wholly filled with compassions!
I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim.
For I am God and not man.
The Holy One in the midst of thee!
I will not come to exterminate!
They shall come after Jehovah as after a lion that roars;
For he shall roar, and his sons shall come hurrying from the west.
They shall come hurrying as a bird out of Egypt,
And as a dove out of the land of Assyria;
And I will cause them to dwell in their houses, saith the Lord."—xi. 8–11.

To our unintelligent way of taking all the fine imaginative poetry and burning rhetoric of Scripture *au pied de la lettre*, and of making formal predictions and rigid doctrines out of everything—even of the varying moods and throbbings of a soul full of passionate love and passionate anguish — this interpolation of a promise rich with mercy and blessing in the very midst of decrees of absolute reprobation might well seem illogical. Accordingly all sorts of absurd and casuistical ways of "reconciling" this passage with those that have gone before have been adopted by commentators. The menaces have been applied to the Israelites, the promises to the Christian Church in a manner perfectly wooden and partly false. To Hosea himself, to those whom he addressed, it would have been no real comfort but only an illusory and miserable *semblance* of comfort to be told that though *they* should utterly perish in the desolating storm of Assyrian invasions, yet, centuries and millenniums afterwards, others — Gentiles and mixed peoples in no sense descended from them—should live peaceably in their old homes. The Jews may well complain, with a somewhat bitter smile, of the self-satisfied infallibility of error which applies every denunciation and reproach to their lost and scattered nationality, and every word of hope and healing to their Gentile oppressors. To tell the children of the northern tribes that God

[1] Ewald, "Prophets," i. 279, Eng. tr.

dearly loved them, and repented of His anger towards them, and was overwhelmed by compassion for them, but that this would be shown by sweeping them into hopeless captivity and letting them disappear altogether and be obliterated in foreign and heathen lands, and by bringing hostile aliens into their land many centuries later to be inheritors of their privileges—this would have been a mockery of mockeries. Supposing that a prophet were to arise in England and roll over our heads the storm of doom, and to prophesy that Germans should trample on our fields, or Frenchmen rule in our cities—that our homes should be laid waste, and our minsters dashed into shards, and our fleets sunk, and our people scattered all over the world to be lost in the misery of exile among alien nations; and then, with a voice which broke with tenderness, were to announce that, after all, this should not be so, but that God loved us deeply and would have pity upon us, and that in spite of everything which he had said there should be peace and prosperity for England and her sons;—should we not justly regard him as an idle babbler so far as any comfort to us was concerned, if it were explained that his words meant no more than that in A.D. 3000, or later, other peoples who now hated us, or of whose very names we were ignorant, should flourish in the place of an obliterated English nationality? If any are still content with the hollow way in which the Scriptures of the Old Testament in general, and the prophets in particular, have been treated, their minds must be steeped in hopeless traditionalism. Perhaps one or two centuries hence it may at last be seen that our commentaries are filled with the rubbish of false conventionality, and that the first thing to be done by those whose hearts are open to the truth is to fling those idols of untrue exegesis to the moles and the bats, and go to the Scriptures themselves, and to scholars who love truths better than ecclesiastical popularity, to see what they really say and really mean.

For out of such opposing utterances—"Israel shall be exterminated," "Israel shall not be exterminated"; "Israel shall be scattered in all lands," "Israel shall again dwell in his own land,"[1] we cannot with any sincerity make either definite predictions or exact doctrines. All that we are witnessing is the to and-fro contending currents of a human soul, dilated and

[1] See ix. 3, 12, 17; xiii. 3, 16; as compared with xiv. 4–7. v. Orell says (p. 200), "Schroffe Antithesen reihen sich *unvermittelt* an einander."

inspired by love of God, and rising out of the pessimism naturally created by the contemplation of guilt and retribution, into that holy optimism which recognizes, in spite of all, that God doeth all things well. Israel perished; Israel was not restored. In any literal sense it is not possible that its lost tribes ever should be restored; nor would it have been the smallest satisfaction to Hosea and his contemporaries if, perhaps ten thousand years after they had mouldered into dust, their infinitely and indistinguishably mixed descendants could be brought back to a land inferior in most respects to many other lands. But what the prophet had grace to see was the certainty that God is amid all confusions a God of order, amid all contradictions a God of verity, amid all judgments a God of love. It is this element of hope which gives to the writings of the prophets their highest value, for it is a recognition of the eternal principle of the government of the world. And this golden close of the denunciations, this opening even in the valley of Achor a door of hope, this pointing to the resplendent arc of the rainbow of mercy amid the darkest bursts of storm, is the most marked characteristic not of Hosea only, but of Joel, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and all the greatest of the true prophets. They saw, as clearly as Goethe did, that in the nature of things there are irreconcilable antinomies—that is, laws apparently conflicting, apparently contradictory, which are equally true, though by us irreconcilable, because their ultimate unity and reconciliation runs up into regions of infinitude beyond our feeble grasp.

Accordingly the book closes with promises yet more unmistakable, with hopes yet more glowing; and though in the three last chapters we still find gloom and threats of terrible and even overwhelming retribution, the storm ends in a joyous calm. It almost seems as if it were specially needful to establish the mournful side of the truth, only that after it had been thus finally established it might be utterly abandoned.[1] But the apparent contradiction is, as we have seen, nothing but the separate statement of complemental truths.

5. FINAL RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION (xi. 12–xiv.).

1. *Worldliness.*—Ephraim is deceitful, Judah unsteadfast.[2]

[1] Ewald, p. 298

[2] The rendering, both of the A. V. and the R. V. here, as in some other places, is practically nonsense. How can Hosea say, "Judah yet

Ephraim pursues the wind, hunts the storm, increases lies and violence, makes covenants with Assyria, and carries oil as a present to Egypt. He must be punished, and Judah also, as untrue to the ideal of his father Jacob, who once in his power took his brother by the heel, and conquered the wrestling Angel with prayer and supplication. God might still, as of old, speak with Israel at Bethel if he would return to God (xi. 12–xii. 6).

2. *Dishonesty.*—Ephraim is a Canaanite, and has grown rich by dishonesty,[1] not believing that such gain of riches is also gain of guilt. They shall become nomads once more because they have despised God's revelations by His prophets. Gilead is morally nought, and shall be reduced to utter nothingness. Their Gilgal altars shall become *gallîm*, scattered stone-heaps in the open field.[2] God of old preserved Jacob and Moses in perils, but Ephraim has forsaken God, and must bear the recompense of his apostasy (xii. 7–14).

3. *Idolatry.*—There is a worse sin than deceit and dishonest gain—it is idolatry.[3] Ephraim worships molten images and calves. He shall be swept away like the morning cloud, like the early dew, like the chaff scattered by the whirlwind, like rising smoke. And what ingratitude to Him who had saved them from the wilderness, and granted them the prosperity which they abused! Therefore God would be to them as a lion, or a panther, or a bear bereaved of her whelps: He would rend their very heart (xiii. 1–8).

4. *Distrust in God.*—The prophet now declares in broken grammar, as though his voice were interrupted by sobs, that unfaithfulness to God has been Israel's destruction,[4] and there-

ruleth with God, and is faithful with the Holy One," when immediately after (xii. 2) Judah's utter unfaithfulness is denounced? Clearly the rendering should be (as in the margin):

> "Also Judah is yet unsteadfast with God,
> And with the Holy One who is faithful."

xi. 12 should be read as xii. 1 as in the Hebrew.

[1] Comp. Amos ii. 6, viii. 5; Micah vi. 10.

[2] This took place in the invasion of Tiglath-Pileser II. (2 Kings xv. 29; 1 Chron. v. 26).

[3] xiii. 1 is obscure. The rendering may be, "When Ephraim spake" (in the rebellion against Rehoboam) "there was trembling."

[4] The beautiful rendering (xiii. 9), "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help," is unfortunately erroneous. It should be, "O Israel, it hath destroyed thee, that against Me, against thy help . . . !"

fore the doom must be pronounced upon him. His kings had proved of no avail. Yet the troubles which shall come upon him *might*, but for his unwisdom, be but the promise of a new birth. And, in spite of all, the prophet makes Jehovah utter His irrevocable promise:

> "I will ransom thee from the power of the grave;
> I will redeem thee from death:
> Where are thy plagues, O death?
> Where thy pestilence, O Sheol?"[1]

And yet God cannot repent of the judgment which has been passed upon him. Though his name means "fruitfulness," a desert wind—the simoom of Assyria—shall parch him up.[2] Samaria shall be desolate; the infants shall be dashed to pieces; the women with child shall be ripped up!

Most characteristic of the prophet and his entangled method and mingled despair and hopefulness, is the interpolation of a promise of triumphant love in the very midst of a menace of the terrific ruin. But, in the last strophe, love becomes absolutely and finally victorious. Already the sunlight has once or twice struggled through the rifts of storm (xi. 8–11; xiii. 14), but now the sun chases away the thunderclouds altogether, and, as though the sweetness of the theme inspired the prophet with lovelier imagery and more melodious strains, he passes into a closing utterance of flowing music (xiv.), which takes the form of a colloquy between repentant Israel and his Lord. First the prophet, in words of extreme tenderness, calls on his people to turn and repent, and abandon all hope in Assyria, or in horses,[3] or in idols, and to

(thou hast become unfaithful). The figure thus explained is an *aposiopesis*—a sentence which the speaker leaves unfinished out of deep emotion.

[1] It is thus that these words are interpreted by the LXX., the Targum, Symmachus, the Vulgate, &c., and St. Paul seems also to have understood them as a gracious promise. But as the next verse pronounces a terrible doom, some understand them as part of the doom, and render, "Shall I ransom thee? . . . [No!] Where are thy plagues, O Death? [Bring them forth!] Where is thy sting, O Sheol? [Strike these reprobates!] Relenting is hid from my eyes." In either supposition, however, "both the prophet and St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 55) summon Death and Hell to come forth and do their worst."

[2] Besides the play on the meaning of Ephraim there is perhaps another between *parah*, "to be fruitful," and *pere*, "wild ass" (comp. viii. 9), as Rashi supposes. See the note in "Speaker's Commentary," vi. 488.

[3] This implies a reference to Egypt, to which one party had always trusted as a counterpoise to Assyria. Comp. Deut. xvii. 16; 1 Kings x. 28.

plead for forgiveness with God, in whom the fatherless find mercy. Then Jehovah, in words full of soft, sweet pictures, which recall the style and melody of the Song of Solomon, says:

"I will heal their backsliding;
I will love them freely;
For Mine anger is turned away from him.
I will be as the night-mist unto Israel,
He shall blossom as the lily:[1]
And strike his roots as Lebanon.
His saplings shall spread,
And his beauty be as the olive tree,
And his fragrance as Lebanon.
Once more shall those dwelling in his shadow grow wise,
And blossom like the vine,
Whose renown is as the wine of Lebanon.
Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?[2]
I have answered, and will look on him."

Ephraim replies:

"I am like a green cypress."

And Jehovah adds:

"From Me is thy fruit found."

In other words, Though thy name be derived from fruitfulness, yet canst thou have no fruit apart from Me. In which lies the same thought as in the words of our Lord, "I am the true vine . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me."

With that word of gracious promise ends the colloquy of the penitent nation and its forgiving Lord. But the prophet adds by way of epilogue, and in order to give a clue to the antitheses of his varying strain:

"Who is wise that he may understand this,
Prudent that he may perceive it?
For strait are the ways of Jehovah,
And the just shall walk in them;
But backsliders stumble therein."

This conclusion might almost be compared to the last lines in

[1] Pliny, "H. N." xxi. 5, "Lilio nihil fecundius, una radice saepe quinquagenos emittente bulbos."

[2] This may mean, "Ephraim *shall say*, 'What,'" &c.; or, "Ephraim *is*, 'What have I to do with idols?'" or again, "O Ephraim, what have I (Jehovah) to do with idols?"

which the Greek tragedians point the central moral of their trilogies. The lesson which the prophet would impress on the minds of his countrymen is the truth that God requires obedience rather than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; that God loves only the just and the upright, and that religionism without righteousness is a worthless sham.

In the chapters which we have thus briefly analysed in such a way as to represent their central and continuous significance, we have the main message of Hosea, the epitome of all his prophetic work. It is now time to revert to the three introductory chapters. They give us the secret of the imagery which colours all the prophet's language, the autobiographic circumstances which kindled within his heart the fire of prophecy, and the psychological influences which determined the strange play of his everchanging moods.

It is only in dim outline, and with deep reticence, that Hosea reveals to us the story of his domestic agony and shame. And he does so because the story was necessary to show us how the truth had been brought home to his own soul that mercy is God's chiefest and most essential attribute.

> "I will not execute the fierceness of My anger,
> I will not again destroy Israel,
> FOR *I am God and not man*."

What hope has any man—even a St. Paul—what hope had even our Lord Himself before the harsh, brutal, selfish, blundering tribunals of human judgment? What chance have any of God's best saints had, when Priests or Inquisitors were their judges? If God resembled those ecclesiastics whose main arguments have been the boot and the rack, the thumbscrew and the gibbet, the torture-chamber and the stake, what hope could there be for the vast majority of mankind but the endless torments of everlasting torture-chambers and an everlasting *auto da fé*? But the Indian sage was right who said that God could only be truly described by the words, *No! No!*—in other words, by repudiating half the ignoble and cruel basenesses which religious teachers have imagined respecting Him. Because God is God, and not man; God, and not Pilate or Nero; God, and not Arnold of Citeaux or Torquemada; God, and not the Pharisaic elder brother of the parable; God, with the great compassionate heart of unfathomable tenderness—therefore, in all who truly love and know Him perfect love casteth out

fear, for fear hath torment. God is the Father of the prodigal; Christ was the Friend of publicans and sinners. Sin means ruin; nevertheless, God is Love. The words

> "I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger,
> For I am God, and not man,"

might stand for an epitome of much that is most precious in Holy Writ. The orthodoxy of this desolate prophet was not the orthodoxy of the religious teachers of his day, who, as a matter of course, hated him; but *God's* orthodoxy is the truth. And the first and third chapters of Hosea, which are in prose and not in rhythm, tell us how Hosea had learnt the lesson in the agony of a blighted life.

His story was this. He had married a wife whose name, real or symbolical, was Gomer bath Diblaim.[1] There are little touches in the story which make possible the fancy of the English scholar,[2] that he had seen her first in the wild dances of Ashtoreth, "the wreath on her dark locks, the scarlet over her limbs, the jewels on her arms, and anklets." Perhaps Hosea had fondly dreamed that he might save this beautiful creature—save her from all the temptations by which she was surrounded—by making her his wife. In wedding her he believed himself to have obeyed a Divine intimation, of which he may have been at the time less conscious than he became in later years. But alas! from the first she had proved false to him. Even if he tried to clasp his children to his breast, he felt an agonizing doubt; and though, by his own hearth, they might have the names of Ammi and Ruhamah,[3] mentally he was forced to change these names into Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah—"not my people," and "not beloved." He had borne, he had forgiven, he had hoped, he had hidden deep in his own

[1] The names Gomer bath Diblaim are strange. Jerome explains Gomer to mean "consummate," *i.e.*, in lewdness. Bath Diblaim means "daughter of two raisin-cakes," and seems to be alluded to in iii. 1, where "flagons of wine" (A. V.) should be rendered "raisin-cakes," as in Isa. xvi. 7.

[2] The Dean of Wells, in "Lazarus and other Poems," see Hos. ii. 13.

[3] See ii. 1. He called the eldest son Jezreel—"seed," or scattering of God"—partly to intimate the blood-guiltiness of the savage House of Jehu at Jezreel, partly to imply that God should scatter Israel in the plain of Jezreel, and partly as a name of dubious import to imply his domestic suspicions. There is a paronomasia between the words Jezreel and Israel Jezreel was capable of a bad (i. 4, 5) and of a good sense (ii. 22, 23).

heart the rankling wound. But worse followed. Gomer bath Diblaim—unmotherly mother and unwomanly woman—had left him. She had left him for another, but he loved her still. And then, like the prodigal, the beautiful evil woman had begun to sink lower and lower into the miry gulf of shame and retribution. With that brutal cruelty which ever lies close beside selfish passion, her paramour had dragged her into the open market-place, and sold her as a slave. And when none other would pay for one so stained and miserable even a slave's lowest price, the prophet himself had bought her. He had bought her to take her back again to his disgraced and desolate home:—not to be a *wife* to him—that could not be; not to be a mother to Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah—that could not be; not, as in the days of her light youth, to dance in gems and scarlet under the twilight terebinths. No! but, as yet, to sit alone in the ruins of her life; to wail away her days in solitude, to brood over bitter memories beside the hearthstone on which she had kindled the fires of hell. Safe, yet oh how wretched—bearing the punishment of her fall in the outer darkness of a wasted and a shipwrecked life; but still with the hope in the prophet's heart that she could be purified from her sin by long repentance, all her stains washed away by the gracious dew of tears! Because he loved her, he could still believe in that day of penitence; believe with trembling hope that she could yet be cleansed, and restored, and saved. To her he might have said, like the stainless king in the Idylls—

> "For think not, tho' thou would'st not love thy lord,
> Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee,
> I am not made of so slight elements.
> Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
> Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,
> I, whose vast pity almost makes me die.
> Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
> Forgives. Do thou for thine own soul the rest.
> Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
> And, so thou lean on our fair Father Christ,
> Hereafter in that world where all are pure,
> We two may meet before high God."

Such is the dark, sad story which Hosea pathetically shadows forth in the three first chapters; and it taught him the chief lesson of his life. For he accepted God's dealings with him,

and found that though the chastening was grievous, it brought forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness in his soul. By virtue of his holy submissiveness he became one of the greatest of the prophets, and in the fall, the punishment, and the amendment of an adulterous wife, he saw a symbol of God's ways with sinful men.

For the lesson which he learnt was this. If the love of man can be so deep, how unfathomable, how eternal must be the love of God!

First of all the prophets he "rises to the sublime height of calling the affection with which Jehovah regards His people *love*." In Amos God is beneficent, and *knows* Israel; in Joel God is glorious and merciful; but Hosea introduces a new theological idea into Hebrew prophecy when he ventures to name the *love* of God. Hence, "Amos is the prophet of morality, of human right, of the ethical order in human life; but Hosea is a prophet of religion."[1]

And to what unknown depths cannot God's love pierce! Agonizing experience had taught him that human love, so poor, so frail, so mixed with selfishness—human love, whose wings are torn and soiled so easily, and which droops before wrong like a flower at the breath of a sirocco—even human love, though disgraced by faithlessness, though dragged through the mire of shame, can still survive. Must not this then be so with the unchangeable love of God? If Hosea could still love the guilty and thankless woman, would not God still love the guilty and thankless nation, and by analogy the guilty and thankless soul? That is why, again and again, the voice of menace breaks into sobs, and the funeral anthem is drowned, as it were, in angel melodies. He saw the decadence and doom of Ephraim; he saw king after king perish by war and murder; he heard the thundering march of the Assyrian shake the ground from far; he knew that the fate of Samaria should be the fate of Beth-Arbel; and yet, in spite of all, in his last chapter his style ceases to be obscure, rugged, enigmatical, oppressed with heavy thoughts; and to this doomed people he still can say, as the message of Jehovah, "I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away."

It is so intolerable to the prophet to regard God's alienation from his people as final, that from the first he intimates

[1] Prof. Davidson, referring to Duhm, "Theology of the Prophets."

the belief that they should repent and be forgiven, and become numberless as the sands of the sea, and that Judah—of whom at first he thought more favourably than at a later time—shall be joined with them under a single king.[1]

As we have explained his story it becomes needless to enter into the endless controversies as to whether Hosea's relation to Gomer was a fiction, or a vision, or a reality, or an act of obedience to an immoral command. We understand that when he felt the Divine impulse to marry her, he may indeed have been aware that she was of a frivolous nature, which he hoped to elevate, but she had not yet revealed the depravity which attaches to her name. And when he has discovered her vileness he will not give her up. He bids her children to plead with her lest his wrath should be irrevocably awakened, and at every line the figure of his guilty wife is confused with that of his sinful nation. What Gomer's infidelity was to him, that was the idolatry of the nation in the sight of God; the path of Gomer, like that of Ephraim, had been hard and bitter; experience had taught her that she was happier with her first husband, and had taught Ephraim that all her blessings came from God (ii. 4–7). Such apostasy could not but end in shame and punishment (8–13),[2] yet these disciplinary chastisements might bring about a more blessed betrothal, so that even the gloomy valley of Achor ("trouble") should be a door of hope (14–20). The ill-omened names of the children should be reversed in significance, and a day should dawn on which God's blessings should be shown in the blessings of heaven and earth (21–23).

Gomer grew more shameless, as Israel did; she went to her lovers, and Israel to his idolatry. Hosea brings back his wife for fifteen silverlings and some corn and barley,[3] and she had to sit desolate in his house many days. Even so should Israel be for many days without king, or prince, or sacrifice, or image, or ephod, or teraphin; "afterward shall the children of Israel

[1] ii. 1–3.

[2] In ver. 12, for "I will make them" (the lovers) "*a forest*"; the LXX. read, "I will make them '*a testimony*,'" by a slight change.

[3] iii. 2. The word for a "half-homer" occurs here only. The whole price given may be reckoned at £3 15s.—a very low sum. It was the compensation to be given for a slave gored by a bull (Ex. xxi. 32).

return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." [1]

This, then, is the outline of the three first chapters. They were written in the outwardly prosperous, but inwardly corrupt days of Jeroboam II., when the possibilities of hope seemed brighter than they could be during the succeeding tumults and anarchies. In these chapters the repentance and restoration of Israel is prophesied as clearly as his abandonment by God. It was not till the last that the strong faith of the prophet triumphed over the deepening darkness. But the general characteristics of his mind and style are the same throughout.

There is little directly Messianic prediction in Hosea, but his promises of hope and deliverance point to the Messianic age in i. 11; ii. 15–23; iii. 5; xi. 10, 11; and especially xiv. 4–8. None of these predictions found any exact and literal fulfilment, but they all indicate the great hope which lay deep in the heart of all the true prophets of the Lord.

[1] The Rabbis recognize "David their King" in its Messianic sense (Berachoth, f. 5. *a*; Megillah, f. 18. *a*).

CHAPTER IX.

JOEL.

Joel—Nothing known of him—His name—Widely different conjectures as to his date—Elements of the decision—His style—His eschatology compared with that of other prophets—Indications that he was a post-exile prophet—Allusions to the Captivity—Priestly sympathies—Recapitulation—Origin of the prophecy—Indebtedness to earlier sources.

"Joel, the son of Pethuel."

THESE words exhaust all that we know directly respecting the author of one of the most polished and eloquent books of the Minor Prophets.

It cannot even be said with certainty that we know as much as this, for the names Joel and Pethuel may, like Malachi, be symbolic. *Joel* means "Jehovah is God,"[1] and Pethuel perhaps "persuaded of God";[2] and if by accident the real name of this prophet has been lost, as were those of others no less eminent, it is by no means impossible that a significant title may have been given him.[3] That Pethuel was himself a prophet is an invention of the Talmudists. All that we may further learn of Joel is the inference suggested by his book that he belonged to Judah, and in all probability lived at Jerusalem.[4] It has been supposed that he was a priest, but his references to the priests (i. 9, 13, 14; ii. 17) neither prove this, nor even render it pro-

[1] According to Merx, it might be a jussive form from הוֹאֵיל, and mean, "May He begin." Among the many monographs on Joel may be mentioned those of Credner (1831), Wünsche (1872), Merx (1879).

[2] LXX. Βαθουήλ. Vulg. Phatuel. Some identify it with Methuel, "Man of God." Rashi, from the Midrash, makes it mean בַּתּוּ אֵל, God shall persuade.

[3] The name Joel was not uncommon. It was borne by the eldest son of Samuel (1 Sam. viii. 2), and by a son of King Uzziah, and others (1 Chron. iv. 35; vi. 33, 36; vii. 3; xv. 11; &c.); Megillah, f. 15.

[4] ii. 1, 15; iii. 18, 21.

bable. The assertion of the Pseudo-Epiphanius that Joel belonged to the tribe of Reuben, and was buried at Bethhoron is not worth the paper on which it is written.[1] Even if true it would tell us nothing, for long before Joel's time "Reuben" had become a geographical expression, and scarcely even that.

There is not one of the prophets whose date is still so uncertain, because it has to be conjectured from vague and variable data. When almost every critic differs from his predecessor it may well be supposed either that the elements for a final decision are lacking, or that they have been approached under preconceptions which lead to a misinterpretation of their real significance.

The critics differ from each other by a space of four centuries.

Credner, who in 1831 wrote an important and elaborate book on Joel, places Joel between 890 and 840, and he has been more or less closely followed by Winer, Hitzig, Ewald, Schrader, Keil, Delitzsch, and others. Ewald even regards his book as the earliest of the extant prophetic writings, and in this he seems to show less than his usual remarkable insight.

De Wette places Joel between 870–840.

Knobel thinks that he prophesied under Uzziah about 800.

Hengstenberg and Hävernick make him a contemporary of Hosea and Amos about 790.

Theiner and Berthold refer his prophecy to the reigns of Hezekiah and Ahaz about 730, so that he would be a contemporary of Isaiah.

Jahn, following the *Seder Olam*, holds that he lived under Manasseh in 690.

Eckermann brings him down to the reign of Josiah, about 630.

Schröder (1829) and Kuenen argue for a still later date, and place him in or near the days of the Exile—about 590.

Vatke and others think—and this is the view which has found a powerful supporter in Merx, and seems likely to supersede all the others—that he was a prophet of the days of Nehemiah, about 445. As I adopt the views of Merx, I shall chiefly follow his remarkable treatise, "Die Prophetie Joel und Ihre Ausleger" (Halle, 1879).

In the present condition of Hebrew learning, it is useless to attempt to decide the question on philological grounds. When two Hebraists so profound as Ewald and Hitzig take such

[1] It is a guess founded on 1 Chron. v. 4.

different views of language, that the one can feel sure that the Second Psalm is of Davidic, and the other of Maccabean origin, we may infer that philological considerations can rarely be regarded as decisive except in cases where there are very marked Aramaisms or other peculiarities.[1] On the other hand, any one who is acquainted with literature may judge for himself that the style of Joel is eminently smooth and flowing, and its golden facility, so free from the ruggedness of Hosea and Amos, is a far more common phenomenon in the later than in the earlier epochs of national literature.

Credner and his many able followers were all influenced by the facts that (1) Joel makes no mention of either Syrians or Assyrians in iii. 4, 19; and that (2) Amos and other prophets appear to utilize some of his phrases.[2] But not to dwell on the uncertainty in many cases of the "argument from silence," they do not attempt to disprove that (1) Joel may have written *long after* the days of the Syrians and Assyrians; and (2) that he may have borrowed largely from other prophets, not they from him.

To argue that Joel must have lived *before* 840—because otherwise he would have alluded to the Syrians of Damascus who about that time attacked Jerusalem, in the reign of Joash (2 Chron. xxiv. 23; 2 Kings xii. 18); and *after* 890—because he speaks of the Edomites and Philistines as independent, whereas they were subject till the reign of Joram, is clearly useless, if reasons can be urged for the view that he lived at a much later time, when the Edomites and Philistines were free, and when Syria and Assyria had practically ceased to exist.[3]

[1] The knowledge of Hebrew has, no doubt, gone on improving ever since the days of Reuchlin, and style and language will perhaps ultimately be *decisive* criteria; but at present even great Hebraists often differ by 600 years in the dates they give as an inference from style, which, says Dr. Pusey, is "as if men doubted *from internal evidence* whether a work were written in the time of William the Conqueror or in that of Cromwell; or St. Louis or Louis XVIII.; or whether Herod was a contemporary of Callimachus, and Ennius of Claudian, or the author of the 'Niebelungen Lied' lived with Schiller" ("Minor Prophets," p. 227).

[2] The controversy about the word "the Northerner" in ii. 20 will be considered later.

[3] Who are meant by the Sabeans in iii. 8, is doubtful. Comp. Ezek. xxvii. 22.

In point of fact there is in Joel a general absence of foreign politics, as well as of social allusions; and his mention of Phœnicia, Philistia, Edom, and Egypt would have been equally applicable at different epochs. The Philistines are chiefly reproached as slave dealers, who sold Jewish slaves to Javan, and by Javan seems to be meant the Ionians, that is the Greeks. Credner and Hitzig do indeed refer the name to a town in Arabia, but there is no trace of any connection of this Javan with the slave trade. Gaza was a slave emporium in the days of Amos (Amos i. 6), and it continued to be so down to the days of the Romans. Obadiah and even Malachi (i. 4) still complain of Edom. The advocates of the early date are compelled to explain the allusion to Egypt as a reference to the invasion of Shishak, but that must have been almost forgotten at the earliest date which we can assign to the prophet.

If we are to rely on such purely negative arguments, it is a much stronger negative argument *against* the early date of Joel that he nowhere makes the slightest allusion to the Northern Kingdom of the Ten Tribes.[1] Hosea, Amos, the earlier Zechariah, Micah, and Isaiah constantly speak of the Kingdom of Ephraim, but for Joel, as for some of the latest prophets, it might be non-existent. If Joel had written in the days of Joash he would hardly have spoken of Judah as representing exclusively the people of Jehovah.

And there are similar arguments from silence, far more decisive than those to which so much importance has been attached.

1. Thus Joel, unlike the early prophets, is entirely silent—except in the way of distant allusion—as to the *wickedness* of either Judah or Israel. No prophet dwells so little on moral considerations.

2. He does not say a word in reprobation of the tendency to idolatry, which was an almost continuous aberration of both kingdoms in reign after reign. If such silence can be thought suitable to the reign of Joash, surely it is much more accordant with the days of Ezra.[2]

[1] The mere word "Israel" (ii. 27; iii. 2, 16) of course counts for nothing so far as this argument is concerned. "Of Israel," says Dr. Pusey, "he takes no more notice than if it were not" ("Minor Prophets," p. 94).

[2] "He names neither sins nor sinners among his own people" (Dr. Pusey).

3. He does not once allude to the high places (*Bamoth*), which are made so incessantly a subject of reproach in the Books of Chronicles and Kings. Amos complains of them (vii. 9), and Hosea (x. 8), and Micah (i. 5). Is it likely that Joel, if he was an elder contemporary, would have been entirely silent?

A crowd of positive considerations seem to make it certain that Joel lived after the return from the Exile. For the entire tone of Joel's theology and eschatology is far less prophetic than it is priestly and apocalyptic. It is external and particularist. It has none of the breadth, richness, and spirituality of Isaiah or Micah. The heathen are annihilated, not won over to the knowledge of God, as in Micah. The Jews are saved apparently as Jews, with no express distinction, as in the later Isaiah,[1] between the good and the bad;[2] and the heathen are destroyed as heathen, with no reference, as in Zechariah and Zephaniah, to those who shall be converted.[3] The "outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh" is no exception to this purely Judaic point of view; for, as in Ezekiel xxxix. 29, it refers primarily to Judah, and comes *before* the signs of terror, and the excision of the nations; and the fruits of this Pentecost are not, as in the New Testament, love, joy, peace, holiness, but dreams, visions, and prophecy. And "prophecy" is put first, and not last, so that it must apparently be understood in something lower than its best sense.[4]

In point of fact the eschatology of Joel is scarcely an outpouring of impassioned and original prophecy like that of earlier and greater prophets. It has to a large extent an apocalyptic and literary character. It accords with the less burning inspiration and more formal religion of the post-exilic period. The details of his prophecy of the future, as set forth in the second division of his prophecy, are as follows. Speaking in the name of Jehovah, he promises—

1. Fertility, and deliverance from reproach, and destruction of the locusts, and abundant rain, and honour (ii. 19–27).[5]

2. Outpouring of the Spirit (ii. 28–32).

3. Signs and wonders before the day of the Lord (ii. 30, 31).

[1] Isa. lxv. 11. [2] Mic. iv. 2, 3; Isa. lxvi. 16.

[3] Zech. xiv. 16, 17; Zeph. iii. 8–10.

[4] See Merx, pp. 21, 22, to whom I am also indebted in the following clauses.

[5] Comp. Amos ix. 13; Isa. xxxii. 15, vii. 6, 7, lix. 21, lxi. 5; Jer. xxxi. 33.

4. Refuge and deliverance in Jerusalem for those who call on the name of Jehovah, and the remnant whom Jehovah shall call (ii. 32).

5. Assembling of all the nations[1] in the valley of Jehoshaphat, to judge them for the captivity and scattering of Israel (iii. 1–3).

6. Special threats against Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia for having sold Jewish captives (iii. 4–6).

7. Return of the Jews, and retaliation on their enemies (iii. 7, 8).

8. Command to proclaim this prophecy and to prepare for war (iii. 9, 10).

9. Summons to the nations (iii. 11, 12).

10. Command to the Jews to slaughter them (iii. 13, 14).

11. Darkening of the sun and moon,[2] and the roar of Jehovah from Jerusalem against the heathen, but His protection of His people (iii. 15, 16).

12. Security of Jerusalem, and her blessings, and her fertilising influence (iii. 17, 18).[3]

13. Desolation of Egypt and Edom (iii. 19).

14. Eternal peace and prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem (iii. 20, 21).[4]

There is scarcely one of these elements—of which the order is sometimes surprising—which does not seem to be borrowed from older prophets. Isaiah is full of prophecies of the glory and peace of Judah; Ezekiel speaks of the outpouring of the Spirit (xxxix. 29); the signs in the sun and moon and stars and the gathering of the nations are powerfully set forth in Isaiah (lx. 19; xxiv. 23; xxxiv. 1; comp. Ezek. xxxii. 7). And it is remarkable that in Isaiah xxxiv. the threat against "all the nations" suddenly passes into a special denunciation against Edom. In Micah (v. 8), as here, there is a destruction of the nations, and in Zephaniah (iii. 8) they are assembled for judgment, which is, however, followed by mercy. Again, in the earlier Zechariah (xii. 9), "all nations that come against Jerusalem" are to be destroyed, but afterwards (xiv. 8)—not *before*, as in Joel—there is an outpouring of the Spirit. It seems clear that Joel has used these and other passages in his collective picture, and has not combined them in the same order

[1] Comp. Zeph. iii. 8.
[2] Comp. Amos v. 8, viii. 9; Ezek. xxxviii. 22.
[3] Ezek. xlvii. 6–12.
[4] Isa. xlix. 5; Ezek. xxix. 26; Mal. i. 3.

as in their original sources. And the sudden introduction of Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom (in iii. 4–8) is more easily explained if we suppose that Joel was not uninfluenced by what he had read in the Prophet Ezekiel;[1] only the world of Joel, as we should expect in a prophet of the period which succeeded the Exile, has a narrower horizon than that of Ezekiel.

With the late date agrees the absence of all mention of the king or princes.[2] In Jeremiah xvii. 20 we read: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;" but in Joel i. 14 the appeal is only to the elders and all the inhabitants of the land. The elders are not mentioned at all by the oldest prophets, though they are appealed to in Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the later Isaiah. The state of organisation here contemplated is exactly such as prevailed under the mild sway of the Persians after the return from the Exile.

But further there are passages which seem directly to refer to the Babylonish captivity, and which cannot be easily explained on any other hypothesis than that Joel lived after the Exile. Thus in iii. 1 we read: "In that time when I shall bring again *the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem*, I will gather all nations, and will plead with them for My people and My heritage Israel, *which they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land.*" And in iii. 17: "Then shall Jerusalem be happy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more."

The attempt to refer this captivity to the obscure raid of the Philistines, Arabians, and Ethiopians mentioned in 2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17 is very unsuccessful. That raid seems chiefly to have resulted in a plundering of the palace of King Jehoram. It is difficult to imagine that allusions so clear would have been overlooked if the critics had not attached too great importance to the conjectural and subjective place assigned to Joel in the order of the Hebrew canon—an order which is not retained even in the Septuagint.

Again, we find in Joel a stage of religious conceptions wholly different from that of the early prophets. In Joel fasting seems

[1] Ezek. xxv. 15; xxvi.–xxviii., xxx., &c.

[2] The advocates of the earlier date account for this by the long minority of Joash under the High Priest Jehoiada.

to be endowed with an efficaciousness beyond that which it assumes in the writings of any of his predecessors. Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Zechariah speak of it but slightly, and almost with depreciation;[1] but in Joel it assumes the prominence which we know that it attained in the post-exile and Maccabean period.[2] So, too, he speaks of the drink-offering, to which Ezekiel also slightly alludes in his ideal *cultus* (xlv. 17), but which otherwise in earlier prophets is either not mentioned or only mentioned in connection with heathen worship (Jer. vii. 18; xix. 13; Isa. lvii. 6; Ezek. xx. 28). Nor again does the *minchah*, or "oblation"—except in the general sense of "present" or "fruit-offering"—attract much notice in the earlier times. Ezekiel, in his later section, often alludes to it, but it has no great significance in any other prophet except Malachi. Until the days of Ezra the daily oblation seems to have been the private offering of the king.[3] But Joel repeatedly refers to a fear lest it should cease,[4] a fear which is itself curious, because the amount required for it was so exceedingly small. In Joel, too, we find that close alliance of prophets with the priestly party which existed after the Exile, but of which there is little earlier trace. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were priests, but were completely alienated from the general priestly body, and were persecuted by them. Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah stood in strong antagonism to their priestly contemporaries; but Joel and Malachi were priestly in their sympathies, and they resemble the prophets chiefly in their eschatology. All the circumstances point, therefore, to the inference that Joel lived in the period of rest and literary activity which succeeded the struggles of Nehemiah with the Samaritans and other neighbouring peoples. To this period belongs the production of Esther, Jonah, Malachi, the Books of Chronicles, Ezra Nehemiah, and other books. The second Temple was built, so that he must have written after 516; and probably the walls of Jerusalem (ii. 9) were finished, in which case he lived after 445. We know that in the days of Nehemiah there was a considerable amount of prophetic activity (Neh. vi. 7–14).

To sum up these indications, we may surely say that Joel's

[1] Isa. lviii. 5–11; Jer. xiv. 12; Zech. vii. 5, viii. 19.

[2] Jonah iii. 5–7; Neh. i. 4, ix. 1; Ezra viii. 21; Esth. iv. 3–16, ix. 31 Dan. ix. 3; Judith viii. 6, &c.

[3] Wellhausen, "Gesch. Isr." 78. [4] i. 9, 13, 16; ii. 14.

allusions to a recent captivity (iii. 1, 2); his complete silence respecting the northern tribes; the fact that he does not allude to any king, but only to sheykhs and priests; his polish and perfection of style; his apparent familiarity with previous writers; his attitude of union with the priestly party; his allusions to Levitic worship; his freedom from any denunciation of idolatry and irregular worship; the fact that he writes neither in strophes nor in verse, but in rhythmic-prose—these, and the narrowness of his political horizon, all seem to mark that his date must be fixed four centuries and more later than that adopted by Credner and Ewald.

In fact, some of the difficulties of a prophet—whose smooth and easy style[1] has concealed from many critics the fact that he is *full* of difficulties—are most easily met by the supposition that, being a deep student of the writings of his predecessors, and seeing that many of their prophecies—whether of the overthrow of the nations or of the glories of Judah—were still unaccomplished, he based upon their predictions his main conceptions as to the Day of the Lord, while he placed the groundwork of this eschatology on the basis of events which he had personally witnessed.[2] He found his motive in a peculiarly disastrous plague of locusts, surpassing in horror and devastation any which had happened in the memory of man. This naturally turned his thoughts to the plague of locusts recorded in Exodus. The plague of darkness, the death of the first-born, and the ultimate deliverance, suggested to him a sequence of pictures such as had already been shadowed forth in much the same order in the 78th and 106th Psalms. This was all the more natural to him, because a similar series of conceptions had been powerfully set forth in Ezekiel (xx.), with whose writings he seems to have been familiar. But Joel also must, like Micah and the other prophets, be understood symbolically and conditionally. His predictions are general,

[1] Dr. Pusey calls it "a blending of energy and softness." "Die Glätte eine Ergebniss seiner Studien, eine Renaissance-Erscheinung ist, wie sie die jungsten Psalmen, z. b. Ps. xliv., ebenfalls darbieten eine Stylgewandtheit die mehr der Sprache der Jüdischen Liturgie in den Machzor als der eines Amos und Hosea gleicht" (Merx, p. 78).

[2] Knobel ("Prophetismus" l. 325), on the supposition that other prophets borrowed from Joel, points to such passages as Isa. xxiv. 21, xxxii. 19; Mic. v. 8; Zeph. iii. 8–19; Zech. i. 15, ii. 4, xii. 9, xiv. 3, 12; Hag. ii. 6–21.

not minute ; ideal, not literal. His main object was to awaken religious earnestness by alternate appeals to fear and hope.

But if the arguments of Merx and others be valid to prove that Joel was a prophet of the latest period, it is needless to enter into any separate discussion of the question whether he borrowed from Amos or Amos from him.[1] This question, and others which resemble it, is at once settled by the chronology. It is also probable that he felt the influence of Obadiah.[2]

[1] See Amos i. 2, ix. 13 ; Joel iii. 16, iii. 18.

[2] Comp. Joel iii. 3, 19 with Obad. 10, 14, 11; and ii. 32, iii. 17, with Obad. 17. Merx has in favour of his view the authority of a very ancient Midrash.

CHAPTER X.

THE BOOK OF JOEL.[1]

Outline of the prophecy—1. The Day of the Lord and the locust plague—2. Historic notice—3. Consoling promise of the nearer future—4. The blessings of the Church, the judgment of the world. Difficulties of interpretation—Are the locusts literal or allegorical?—Difficulties in either view.

TURNING to the prophecy as a whole, we find that it falls into the two obvious divisions of a call to repentance, and a promise of blessing. In the first part (i.–ii. 17) Joel describes the misery and ravage caused by a plague of locusts, which in part constitute "a Day of the Lord," and threaten the near approach of a Day of the Lord yet more terrible and decisive. In view of this he demands a day of solemn penitence and prayer. In the second part (ii. 19*b*–iii. 21) he introduces promises of Divine deliverance and mercy which are spoken by Jehovah Himself, and which we may suppose to have followed the day of humiliation. These two divisions are linked together by two verses (ii. 18, 19*a*), which contain what Ewald calls a short historical explanation.

The outline of the book is as follows :—

1. THE DAY OF THE LORD INDICATED BY THE LOCUST PLAGUE (i. 2–20).

He opens with a declaration that the extent and continuance of the locust-plague were without a parallel. The vineyards and fig-trees were ruined by this army of lion-like invaders. Everywhere is distress and mourning, which is most conspicuous among the priests in the temple service.[2] The wheat and the barley have been destroyed, as

[1] Among *special* commentaries on the Book of Joel may be mentioned Pococke (Oxford, 1691), Chandler (London, 1735), Credner (Halle, 1831), Wünsche (Leipzig, 1872), and especially Merx (Halle, 1879).

[2] The *Minchah* (see Lev. ii. 1) and the drink-offering (Exod. xxix. 40 could no longer be offered.

well as vine and fig, and pomegranate and date and apple. The priests are bidden to spend the night in sackcloth, and to gather the elders and people to a solemn fast, because the Day of the Lord is at hand.[1] Famine and drought and misery are everywhere, afflicting herds of dumb cattle as though one universal fire had scathed the land (i. 2–20).[2]

Blow the trumpet of alarm in Zion, for the day of the Lord is at hand, a day of gloom and darkness. For a people great and mighty is advancing against the land with fire before it, and flames behind, turning the garden of Eden into a wilderness, "and also a parched remnant remaineth not" (ii. 1–3).

Then follows a description of the locusts, in which the excitement and terror caused by their approach is described in the strongest language of Eastern hyperbole. The locusts look like horses,[3] and advance over the mountain-tops like the roar of chariots or the crackling of flame, while nations tremble and all faces gather blackness before them. In unswerving course they scale the walls like warriors, and climb into the houses of the city like thieves, in dense array.[4] The earth shakes before them, and the heaven and its lights are darkened, and Jehovah thunders before their host. Yes, it is a day of the Lord and very terrible (ii. 4–11).

Yet even now it is not too late to turn to God with fasting, and weeping, and heart-penitence, for He is merciful and may repent. Sound the trumpet then, and call an assembly; and let all come, and let the priests weep between the porch and the altar, with a cry that God would save them, and not make His Name a reproach among the heathen (ii. 12–17). Here closes the first division.

2. HISTORIC NOTICE.

We must suppose that the assembly has been held; that the

[1] Comp. Jer. xxxvi. 9; Ezra viii. 21; Jonah iii. 5; Judith iv. 12.

[2] The commentators give long and numerous extracts about the ravages of locusts from Pliny, Orosius, and St. Jerome down to living witnesses. See Pliny, "H. N." ii. 29. For all purposes of illustration enough is given by Thomson, "The Land and the Book," p. 41, seq. 9. A large number of illustrative passages is collected by Dr. Pusey in his laborious commentary.

[3] For the comparison of the locusts with horses compare Rev. ix. 7 and the German and Italian names for grasshoppers—*Heupferde Cavalette.*

[4] Jerome compares the closeness of flight of the locusts to the stones of a mosaic, "instar tesserularum quæ in pavimentum artificis finguntur manu."

solemn rites of penitence and humiliation have been performed; that soon afterwards there fell an abundant rain; that the immediate menace of the day of Jehovah was averted; and that light and gladness returned to the people and to the prophet's heart. Hence two verses form a transition to the changed character of the remainder of the book.

"Then Jehovah was jealous for His land, and spared His people: and Jehovah answered and said to His people"—(ii. 18, 19*a*).

The remainder of the book contains this address, which promises rich and manifold happiness to Judah and destruction to his enemies.

3. THE CONSOLING PROMISE OF THE NEARER FUTURE (ii. 19–27).

There shall be no more drought and famine, or mockery among the heathen. The northerner—(or perhaps, "the infernal," "the ravager")—shall be removed, and the locust swarms swept into the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean and the desert, there to perish and rot. There is a call for universal rejoicing, for God has sent the gracious rain,[1] and with it bursting fertility and abundant reparation for the locust-eaten years. God is in the midst of His people. Never again shall they be ashamed (ii. 19*b*–27).

4. THE BLESSINGS OF THE CHURCH, THE JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD.

i. *The outpouring of the Spirit* (ii. 28, 29) *and its accompanying signs* (30–32).

There shall come an outpouring of the Spirit upon all his people young and old.[2] But therewith terrible signs in heaven of a day of Jehovah which is yet to come, but from which all who call on the Name of Jehovah shall be delivered, and all the remnant whom Jehovah calls (ii. 28–32).

ii. *The judgment of the heathen in the valley of Jehoshaphat* (iii. 1–16).

[1] For "He hath given you *the former rain moderately* (ii. 23, A.V.,) the marg. has "a teacher of righteousness"; but the meaning seems to be "the former rain *in just measure*" (lit., "*in* or *for righteousness*) as in the R.V.; Abarbanel, taking the Hebrew to mean "a teacher of righteousness," explains it of the Messiah. It is not impossible that there may be an intentional play on the two meanings of the word *moreh*, "teacher," and "rain."

[2] Acts ii. 16–21.

But the heathen cannot escape that Day of the Lord. They shall all be assembled in the valley of the Judgment of Jehovah (Jehoshaphat) to give account of their cruelties in selling the Jews into slavery to gratify their luxury and lust. Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, have all taken part in these acts of robbery and wrong. The Jews shall be brought back, but the sons and daughters of their enemies shall in their turn be sold to the Sabeans (iii. 1–8).

The heathen are summoned to battle and to judgment in the valley of Jehoshaphat. There shall take place the vintage of God's wrath amid tumults and under darkened skies, while Jehovah roars from Zion and Jerusalem (iii. 9–16).

iii. *The blessing of Judah* (iii. 17–21).

But His Name shall be glorious and Jerusalem be for ever safe. Then shall follow the fertility of a land blessed with many waters, and from the Temple a stream shall flow which shall water the valley of Acacias. But Egypt and Edom shall be waste, for they have shed innocent blood. Judah and Jerusalem shall be inviolate for ever, and their innocent blood shall be cleansed[1] (iii. 17–21).

According to this brief sketch of the essential contents of the prophecy it might seem to be exceedingly simple and straightforward. Yet it abounds in serious difficulties, so that not only is there great uncertainty about the meaning of several crucial passages and expressions, but also wide and unsettled divergence about its meaning as a whole.

1. It is, for instance, almost impossible to decide whether we are to understand the locusts literally or allegorically. Is Joel thinking of real locusts, or of advancing enemies? or of both?

On this question the critics are divided. Credner, Duhm, and Hitzig, understand the locusts literally; Hilgenfeld, Theiner, Hävernick, Hengstenberg, Pusey, and partly Merx, understand them as symbols of the enemies of Jerusalem. The allegorists are more or less supported by the authority

[1] Lit., "And I will hold as innocent their blood which I have not cleansed"; or perhaps, "I will purge (with punishment) their blood," &c. But the meaning is far from clear. Comp. Deut. xxi. 8; Jer. xxv. 29. Meyrick (in the "Speaker's Commentary") paraphrases it, "I will avenge on their enemies the innocent blood of My people which I have not yet avenged."

of the Targum and of Abarbanel; by most of the Fathers; by Luther, Grotius, and many moderns. The literalists may quote on their side the names of Rashi, Aben Ezra, Kimchi, Calvin, Bochart, and a large number of more recent critics.

The fact that opinion is so equally divided shows that the question is surrounded with difficulties.

Against the view that the locusts are allegorical may be urged the continuance and persistency of the metaphor, and the certainty that locusts are a scourge of the most terrific character. But it is difficult to believe that Joel is speaking of locusts *only*.

i. He speaks for instance of "*the years* which the locust hath eaten" (ii. 23), and except in very unusual instances the ravages of a locust swarm do not extend beyond *one* year. The exception is when, owing to great drought and heat, the eggs which the female locust has deposited before migration are hatched into a new swarm, which follows the direction of the first. In this instance, however, Joel indicates that the rain was sent, the prayer of the people answered (ii. 23), and the calamity removed. The use of the plural "*years*" is not, therefore, adequately explained.[1]

ii. Again, how are we to understand "the palmer-worm, the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar," of i. 4? The Hebrew words are the *gâzâm*,[2] the *arbeh*,[3] the *yeleq*,[4] the *châsîl*, and they seem to mean, in accordance with their etymology, the Gnawer, the Swarmer, the Licker, the Consumer.[5] But are they four different kinds of locusts? As there are eighty known species of this *gryllus migratorius*, the supposition would be possible. But all known ravages of locusts are caused by successive flights of the same insect, not by different varieties. Are they, then, as Credner argues, successive *stages* in the growth of the same insect, meaning the unwinged, the partially-winged, the full-winged locust, and that changing

[1] Credner tries to explain it of the end of one year and the beginning of another; Hitzig of years of famine caused by the ravage of a single swarm.

[2] Only here and in Amos iv. 9. Vulg. *eruca*, "caterpillar"; Syr. *locusta non alata*.

[3] This is the generic word for "locust" (Lev. xi. 22). Comp. Jer. xlvi. 23. The renderings of the LXX. vary.

[4] LXX. βροῦχος, an immature locust.

[5] LXX. ἐρυσίβη "mildew," which is quite wrong.

in colour? Such is the view of Ewald, and he says that these four stages are well-marked.[1] There are insuperable difficulties in this theory. For if four successive stages had been intended in i. 4 why is the order confused and altered in ii. 25 where the *arbeh* is put first, and the *gâzâm* last? This is inexplicable if, as Credner thought, the *gâzâm* in i. 4 meant the mother-swarm, and the *arbeh*, *yeleq*, and *chasîl*, its three metamorphoses. In point of fact there are only *two* broadly-marked changes in the development of the locust—from larva to pupa, and from pupa to full-grown locust. In hot climates the creature can use its wings in about three weeks. It seems certain that the prophet is in no sense writing as a natural historian. The use of the four terms is only due to poetry and rhetoric, just as the Psalmist in Psa. lxxviii. 46, cv. 34, freely employs the words *chasîl* and *jeleq* as interchangeable with the *arbeh* which is used in the Pentateuch to describe the Egyptian plague.

iii. There is a formidable difficulty in the way of the literal sense in the word הַצְּפוֹנִי, in ii. 20, where, speaking of the locusts as perishing by being swept into the desert and the Eastern and Western Seas, the Prophet says, "I will remove far off from you *the Northerner*." It is undoubtedly difficult to account for such a name being given to the locust-army which in Palestine is never (or scarcely ever) known to come from the North, but which flies from the deserts of the South. It is indeed said that they might be carried by a south wind across Arabia, and then be driven by another wind south or south-west into Palestine. But even if this be so, the form of the word indicates the native land—as Coverdale renders it "him of the North"—and is therefore inapplicable to the locusts which swarm from the Sahara and the Libyan Deserts.[2] It has accordingly been assumed by most critics that this is a proof of the figurative character of the entire description, and that by "the Northerner" and "the locusts" are meant in reality the Assyrians.[3] To get rid of this difficulty the literalists

[1] "Prophets," i. 120, Eng. tr. He refers to De Chancel, "Le Grand Désert" (Paris, 1851).

[2] The attempt of Justi to make it mean, "the locusts *advancing northwards*," is absurd.

[3] Compare Zeph. ii. 13, "And He will stretch out His hand *upon the North* (*al-tzaphôn*) and will destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry as a wilderness."

try to escape the meaning of *ha-tzephoni*. Reuss renders it "the devastator," connecting it with the same root as Typhon; Ewald, accepting the same derivation, renders it "the Infernal," observing that the locusts come from the deserts bordering on Egypt which were dedicated to Typhon, the spirit of evil, just as in the Apocalypse the locust-horsemen come out of Hell.[1]

2. It must not, however, be supposed that there are no difficulties in the way of the allegorists. It may, for instance, be noticed that the locusts are *compared* to horses and horsemen (ii. 4) which would be inartistic if they were all along intended to be symbols of a mounted army. Again, if the Gnawer, the Swarmer, the Licker, and the Consumer be taken as allegoric types of four different hostile nations, they explain them of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Macedonians, and Romans, or any other succession of four enemies; or, morally, of anger, lust, vainglory, and impatience, or any other four vices. These arbitrary, fantastic, and baseless modes of explanation might be possible in the days of Gregory I. or of Albertus Magnus, and may still be admissible in the region of homiletic application; but in these days no serious exegete will deem it worth while to bestow a second thought on views which merely float in the air without any basis whatever, or are built up like inverted pyramids, resting only upon the narrowest apex. Merx gives a long series of these attempted explanations which pervert everything and explain nothing; robbing Scripture of all reality and human interest, and turning it into "an obscure wood, in which allegory and ignorance hunt together, in the interests of spurious dogma and false tradition."

For this style of interpretation makes of the whole book a meaningless riddle with no interpretation in particular, in which this or that verse is torn out of its context to receive an explanation of no value, and all the rest is left to explain itself anyhow. For instance, if "the northerner" be the right rendering, and if it means the Assyrians, either the rest of the verse applies to them, in which case it does not bear the slightest resemblance

[1] Maurer tries to connect the word with an Arabic root for *deposuit excrementum*, as though it means *stercoreus*. Hitzig, without altering the meaning "Northerner," explains the word in connection with the North as implying what is dark, hostile, and barbarous, in which he follows an alternative suggestion of Justi.

to any event either in their history or in the history of any others of the Jewish enemies; or the rest of the verse applies only to the locusts, in which case the passage would be to the last degree inartistic and ineffectual.[1] It would be an altogether preferable alternative to suppose a corruption of the text,[2] or to give the word "Northerner" some other meaning;[3] or merely to say that the unexplained difficulty of one word cannot be held to set aside the general bearing of the book; or to suppose that we have here some incorporated gloss.

But difficulties vanish if we take that larger, more reasonable, historical, and critical view of prophecy which is absurdly characterized as "unbelief" by some commentators, but which simply approaches the Scriptures historically, and takes them to be what they actually are and profess to be, with a mind devoted only to the love of truth as the best homage which we can offer to the God of Truth. No one will advance a single inch in the real understanding of Scripture, unless he comes to it with an honest and an open mind. And to do this is so far from being a proof of "unbelief" that it is, on the contrary, an evidence of the faith which believes in the Divine broadening of knowledge, and in the light which lighteth every man, and is ever coming into the world.

For if we elevate the prophets into their true dignity as teachers of a spiritual religion which placed man face to face with God—these difficulties will not arise. The nonsense which commentators have made out of the Apocalypse is a sufficient proof that Scripture was given us for other ends than "the carnal desire to arrive at material evidence by the combination of words or calculations."[4] If we are right in the

[1] Even Pliny ("H. M." xi. 29) was well aware that it was the common fate of locusts to perish in the sea. "Gregatim sublato vento in maria aut stagna decidunt." Jerome says that in his day the rotting carcases of myriads of locusts which had been swept into the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea corrupted the air and bred pestilence.

[2] Thus V. Cöln, Ewald, and Meier suggest the reading *tsipponi*, "marshalled," for *tsephoni*, "Northern."

[3] The word may be symbolic, not geographical. "Behold, I bring evil *from the north*" (Jer. iv. 5–8; Comp. i. 13, vi. 1–6). Since the north is the main region of storms, it was, from early days, connected with evil.

[4] See an excellent sermon on "La Prophétie," by Eugène Bersier, in the *Revue Chrétienne*, Jan. 1889.

view that Joel was a late prophet, and that he moves in the circle of moral convictions and eschatological hopes which had been marked out for him by his great predecessors, it is natural to see in his expression, "I will remove far from you the *Northerner*," another allusion to the imagery of Ezekiel of which his mind is full.[1] Ezekiel had prophesied strongly against Gog and Magog, by which he means the Scythians, who, in the seventh century before Christ, had overflowed from their steppes in a terrible invasion. They had taken Sardis in 629, had defeated Cyaxares in 624, had attacked Ashkelon, and had only been finally driven back in 596. Ezekiel, in imagery which was afterwards borrowed by St. John in the Apocalypse, had ideally described a great earthquake and massacre of those nations in the valley of Hamon-Gog ("the multitude of Gog") and the burial of them "to cleanse the land" so that a city should be called Hamonah—"the multitude." We have here a conception, analogous to that of the later Isaiah, of the terrible realism of which Joel also avails himself.

We think that the true explanation of the Book of Joel becomes clear if we suppose him to be a post-exile prophet, powerfully moved by the writings of his predecessors. As he looked on the poor band of struggling and humiliated exiles, toilfully and with difficulty rearing their poverty-stricken Temple and humble walls, he could not but be struck with the contrast between the smallness of the fulfilment with the magnificence of the promises of the restoration which he found in the older prophecy. In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, with its darkening of the sun, its locust plague, and its death of the first-born, he saw an omen of the future. He found the former deliverance vividly described in the Pæan of the hundred and fifth Psalm,[2] and it seemed to him to offer a type of what

[1] Compare Joel ii. 3, "The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness," with Ezek. xxxvi. 35, "This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden;" Joel ii. 19, "Behold I will send you corn, and wine, and oil . . . and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations," with Ezek. xxxvi. 30, "I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field that ye shall receive no more the *reproach of famine* among the nations." Joel's image of the stream from the Temple which shall water the valley of Acacias (iii. 18) is clearly suggested by the mystic streams of Ezekiel (xlvii. 1–12) and the earlier Zechariah (xiv. 8), only that he omits all mention of the Ten Tribes (Exek. xlvii. 13), which had practically ceased to exist.

[2] Comp. Psa. lxxviii.

yet should be. A real plague of locusts with all its loathsome and desolating horror, gave the immediate impulse to his prophetic activity. He looks upon it variously as a day of the Lord, and as *a precursor* of the day of the Lord. And what should that day be? For the foes of the Jews a day of vengeance, as all previous prophets had prophesied; for the Jews themselves a fulfilment at last of those glowing vaticinations which none could regard as adequately accomplished in the condition of a wretched handful of returning exiles—who, as the later Jews declared, were only as the chaff to the wheat—under a Persian satrap, oppressed by tribute, defiled by mixed marriages, worried and thwarted by Ammonites and Samaritans. There is little or nothing in the prophecy which can be fixed upon as literal. As in the Apocalypse—all is conditional, all is mystic, all is ideal. Literally there has been no fulfilment, and we know now that there can never be a *literal* fulfilment of all those glowing hopes. Their literal fulfilment would involve a retrogression to weak rudiments and material conditions. But mystically, but ideally, all has been fulfilled in the spread of the Gospel; and Christianity was the symbolic stream—of which Joel borrowed the conception from Ezekiel and "Zechariah"[1]—which watering the valley of Acacias should, so to speak, prove to be a lustral stream, a stream which should wash away the stain and shame of that worship of Baal-Peor which was not only a type but an actual exemplification of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.[2]

Joel, in short, is a prophet who dwells on the elements of Hope and Fear, like all those who went before him. He taught the lessons which lie at the basis of all moral and religious teaching—the certain reward of the righteous, the certain punishment of the wicked. Such lessons are eternally true, and meet with multitudes of "springing and germinal fulfilments." They show the hand of God laid amid the crashing wheelwork of History. To feel and illustrate their reality, and in spite of all the terrors and confusions of society still to hold fast to a perfect Hope in the ultimate Mercy of the Merciful, was to exhibit the faith which can never come save from the inspiration of the Almighty.

The prophecy of Joel which is most distinctive—though not

[1] Ezek. xlvii. 1; "Zech." xiv. 8.

[2] Num. xxv. 1; Jos. ii. 1, iii. 1, xxii. 17.

peculiar to him[1]—and which attracted most attention at the dawn of Christianity, was the promised outpouring of God's Spirit upon all flesh, alluded to by St. Peter[2] and by St. Paul,[3] but still awaiting its final and universal fulfilment.

[1] See "Zech." xii. 10; "Isa." xxxii. 15, xliv. 3, liv. 13. It is the fulfilment of the wish of Moses (Num. xi. 29.)

[2] Acts ii. 16–21. [3] Rom. x. 13. See Joel ii. 28–32.

CHAPTER XI.

MICAH.

Incident related by Jeremiah—It shows us the true nature of Hebrew prophecy—The heading—The name Micah—His birthplace and rank—His denunciations—The menace of Assyria—Style of Micah—Difficulties.

WE fortunately know with certainty the date of the Prophet Micah. Jeremiah, a century later, not only furnishes us with an authentic incident of his history, but tells us expressly that he prophesied in the reign of Hezekiah. The story occurs in Jer. xxvi. 8–24, and narrates (as we have already seen) how Jeremiah saved his life by appealing to the precedent of Micah's impunity.

The passage quoted is Mic. iii. 12, and we have here the interesting facts that it was delivered in the reign of Hezekiah; that it had produced—as so sweeping a menace of irremediable destruction might well produce—an intense impression on those who heard it: and yet that Micah had been protected from any punishment or molestation. But we draw from this incident in the life of Jeremiah an inference of far wider significance. It shows us that the prophecy of Micah had been neither immediately nor subsequently fulfilled; and yet that *the moral and conditional element of prophecy was so thoroughly recognized* as not even to suggest any question as to his credibility or prophetic insight. It was held that the prayer and repentance of Hezekiah had availed to avert the threatened doom, however unconditionally it had been pronounced. Few passages more strikingly illustrate the point of view from which the whole genius of Hebrew prophecy can alone be rightly judged.

The introductory title of the Book of Micah, as it is now extant, says that he (as well as Hosea and Isaiah) prophesied in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. We cannot be sure that these headings are anything more than the

gloss of an editor after the Babylonian exile, founded on tradition or conjecture. At any rate there is no part of the extant prophecy which can with any probability be assigned to the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz.[1] There is in many passages a close resemblance between the language of Isaiah and that of Micah, but, as in so many similar cases, it is not easy to determine which of the two borrowed from the other.[2] If the picture of society furnished by Micah is gloomy and unsatisfactory, it must be remembered that the reformation of Hezekiah did not begin until he had been for some years upon the throne, and that, at the best, it was of a partial and unsatisfactory character.

The name Micah was not uncommon. It was identical with Micaiah, and both forms were contractions of the fuller Micajahu, "who is like Jehovah?"[3] When Jah was an element of any name, it was not uncommon to give it an abbreviated form out of motives of reverence. The name had already been twice prominent in Jewish history. It was the name of the Ephraimite, under whose roof the young Levite Jonathan, the grandson of Moses, ignobly served as an idolatrous priest for a few shillings a year;[4] and it was the name of the brave prophet who alone among a crowd of courtly flatterers had dared to tell to Ahab the disastrous issue of his intended expedition against Ramoth-Gilead.[5] It is probably due to some accidental association, or to some intended reference to the identity of names, that the words, "Hear, all ye people," are introduced into the Hebrew text of 1 Kings xxii. 28 as the solemn invocation of Micaiah to the throngs which surrounded the thrones of Ahab and Jehoshaphat by the gates of Samaria. Those words are not found in the Septuagint Version of 1 Kings xxii. 28, and have probably been borrowed from the later

[1] Caspari tries without success to find such passages. The title may, however, correctly indicate the reigns during which Micah *lived*.

[2] Ewald calls Micah "a younger contemporary of Isaiah."

[3] Jer. xxvi. 18, Heb. margin. The name is borne by eleven persons in the Old Testament (see Caspari, "Ueber Micha"; and Simonis, "Onomasticon). In Jeremiah, according to the Hebrew text he was called Micaiah, and this may have been his actual name if the heading (Mic. i. 1) comes not from himself but from an editor after the Exile. In Mic. vii. 18 ("Who is a God like unto Thee?") there is a sort of reference to the prophet's own name, which may be accidental.

[4] Judg. xvii.; xviii. [5] 1 Kings xxii.

prophet, since "all ye peoples" would hardly be suitable for the audience whom Micaiah addressed.

Of Micah, personally, we know nothing beyond the fact recorded by Jeremiah.[1] He is called a Morasthite, and this undoubtedly means that he was an inhabitant of the little town of Moresheth-Gath[2] in the Shephelah or low-lying sea-plain of Philistia. It is probably to this circumstance that we owe the introduction of the name of so small and obscure a place in the first chapter (i. 14).[3]

We see, then, that the position of Micah differed very widely from that of Isaiah. Isaiah was of patrician, perhaps even of princely birth. He could speak to kings in a tone of something like equality, and was familiar with courts and cities. Micah, on the other hand, was a provincial, and a man of the people. His father is unmentioned, probably because he was of humble lineage, and he would have been described by a Jewish noble as Scipio described the mob of the forum—

"St! Tacete quibus nec pater nec mater est."[4]

It is evident that his whole sympathies were with the humble and the oppressed. We see in the first three chapters that his chief moral denunciations are reserved for the wealthy nobles and the worldly priests, some glimpses of whose lives he may have seen in occasional visits to Jerusalem, and whose exactions were felt as a canker throughout the provinces. Samaria is menaced and doomed for her idolatry, but not so Judah. Nothing is said of the idolatry of Judah, unless it be the allusion to her high places in i. 5, where it is not impossible that there may be some later gloss.[5] All the prophet's denunciations are reserved for the greedy aristocrats who coveted fields and

[1] It need hardly be pointed out that the identification of the prophet with Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by such late romancers as Pseudo-Dorotheus and Pseudo-Epiphanius, is not only unauthoritative but absurd.

[2] The name means "Possession of Gath."

[3] The place existed as a village (*viculus*) in the days of St. Jerome (Jerome, "Ep." cviii.), and in A.D. 385 there was a "miraculous" discovery of the prophet's remains, and a church was built in honour of his sepulchre.

[4] The LXX. renders "the Morasthite" erroneously here by *τὸν τοῦ* Μωρασθεὶ "*the son* of Morasthei;" but correctly in Jer. xxvi. 18 by *ὁ* Μωρασθίτης. Compare "Nahum the Elkoshite," "Elijah the Tishbite."

[5] For the LXX. have "What is *the sin* of Judah?" not "the high places"; and so too the Peshito, and the Targum. The high places were removed at the reformation of Hezekiah, in his fifth year.

houses and took them by violence, who oppressed widows and broke up happy homes. In burning words he puts to shame the all but cannibal ferocity of selfish oppression practised by the princes of Judah ;[1] the self-interested flattery and lying ignorance of the false prophets ;[2] the perversion of equity, the bloodshed, the hireling avarice and infatuated security of the priests.[3] Never did any prophet before him assume so openly the attitude of a tribune of the people, or threaten with more inflexible plainness the certainty of the coming revolution. And since it is from the close of this connected prophecy that Jeremiah quotes the verse which had struck such terror into an earlier generation, and had moved the hearts of Hezekiah and Judah to penitence, it is clear that these chapters are a description of the corrupt state of society before the earlier reformation which anticipated the more lasting change wrought by the stricken conscience of Josiah.

The certainty of vengeance for iniquity was among the most axiomatic forms of prophetic teaching. But we shall be prepared to find, in accordance with prophetic analogy, that the general law was emphasized by some menacing phenomenon which was already visible on the horizon. The resuscitation of Assyrian history which has followed the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions has shown that this was the case.

In the fifth chapter Micah mentions the ominous names of "the Assyrian" and "the land of Nimrod," and a great part of his prophecy is evidently written under the immediate anticipation of successful hostile invasion. Judging by inferences founded on the Eponym canons of the Assyrians, who were much more accurate annalists than the Hebrews, and who never contented themselves with the round numbers which make Jewish dates so highly indefinite, we infer that Hezekiah came to the throne about B.C. 726 ; that four years later Sargon succeeded Shalmaneser IV. on the throne of Assyria. Sargon reigned seventeen years, and was succeeded in B.C. 705 by Sennacherib, who invaded Judah in 701, four years before the death of Hezekiah and the accession of Manasseh in 697. Who Sargon was by birth is unknown, though he talks vaguely of the kings his fathers. It is not impossible that he was a general who conspired against his master Shalmaneser, and he was himself murdered by an unknown

[1] iii. 1-4. [2] iii. 5-7. [3] iii. 9-12.

assassin. Certain it is that he was a monarch of exceptional cruelty. He is represented on his monuments as putting out with his own hands the eyes of his miserable captives, while to prevent them from flinching when the spear which he holds in his hands is driven into their eye-sockets, a hook is inserted in their noses or lips and held firm with a bridle.[1] Such was the conqueror of Samaria who early in the reign of Hezekiah not only conquered Karkhemish, but also came terribly near to Jerusalem, for he conquered Raphia, south of Gaza, and Ashdod, whose miserable sheykh, named Yavan, had refused tribute, and was not improbably in league with Hezekiah. After these victories, however, he seems to have devoted himself exclusively to the building of palaces, and until the discoveries of Assyrian remains he was only preserved in memory by the incidental and isolated allusion of the Prophet Isaiah.[2]

While Judah was still corrupt to the inmost core, and when such a potentate was hovering on the confines of her territory, it was not strange that to the vision of Micah the day of retribution was near at hand, though for the moment it was averted by a timely repentance. How far Sargon's vaunted conquest of Judah extended, we do not know; but at any rate the worst consequences of capture were deferred, and the terror of a just vengeance evoked a timely amendment.

The language of Micah is pure and classical. It stands between that of Hosea and that of Isaiah, but its affinities to Isaiah are much the closer. The two prophets resemble each other in style, in thought, in topics, and even in phrases, although the tone of Micah is more that of a provincial, and he does not touch, as Isaiah does, upon the foreign politics of the nation and its relation to Egypt and Assyria.

But the prophecy as a whole presents many difficulties, and the uncertainties of interpretation in many passages have not been removed. Even as far back as the days of the Seventy the state of the text seems to have been corrupt. The book "reads like a collection of extracts. And this is even more striking in the original, because our translators have introduced inferential particles—*but*, *then*, *therefore*, *notwithstanding*, where the Hebrew has only *and*." [3]

[1] See Isa. xxxvii. 29. [2] Isa. xx. 1. [3] Dean Payne Smith.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOOK OF MICAH.

The heading—Abrupt character of the divisions—I. The threat of judgment—Elaborate *paronomasias*—Their significance—II. Guilt and judgment—III. The promise of blessing—IV. The two last chapters—A magnificent colloquy—A high spiritual lesson—The final hope.

THE heading, as we have seen, is probably a later addition. It is identical with the headings of the Books of Hosea and Isaiah, except that the name of Uzziah is omitted, and this is a valuable indication that Micah was a younger contemporary of Isaiah. The variation of the name—Micah instead of "Micaiah," is perhaps a sign that this heading is not original. The words "which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem" are not very descriptive of the contents of the prophecy as a whole, for Samaria is only alluded to in the first chapter, and there only in a brief and passing manner.

The book does not lend itself to precise or certain division of the subject-matter.[1] It is true that the first, third, and sixth chapters begin with the words "Hear ye," and that each of these divisions ends with a promise. In other respects, however, this division does not help us to find our way through the abrupt transitions and strange apparent self-contradictions of the prophet. It seems, indeed, clear that we are here dealing with the fragments of longer oral discourses, and that we hardly possess the remains of the prophet in their integrity, or even perhaps without additions and interpolations.[2] That the two last chapters (vi., vii.) differ in tone from

[1] Among special editions of Micah we may mention Caspari, "Ueber Micah" (1851); Cheyne, "Micah" (1882); Ryssel, "Untersuchungen," (1887).

[2] The text of Micah has been carefully studied by Ryssel, who regards the first five chapters as a loose collection of separate prophecies, possibly by Micah himself, but long after their delivery.

the others is a fact which has struck most modern critics. Ewald divides the book as follows:

1. The Judgment of God (i.).
2. The proof of the necessity of the Judgment (ii., iii.).
3. The Promise (iv. v.).
4. He regards the two last chapters (vi., vii.) as a colloquy written by some anonymous prophet of slightly later date.

Canon Cheyne prefers a simpler and more general arrangement of the book into three parts. In 1 (chapters i.–iii.), threatening or gloom predominate. In 2 (iv., v.), promise predominates. In 3 (vi., vii.), the sadder tone again prevails.

I. THE THREAT OF JUDGMENT (i.).

The prophet calls on the nations and the earth in its fulness to listen, for the witness of Jehovah is against them, and He is going forth to tread upon the melting hills and to cleave the valleys, because of the guilt of Israel and Judah, the idolatry of Samaria, the high places in Jerusalem. Therefore, Samaria shall be made a heap of ruins, rolled down from her hill into the valley, and her idols broken. She began in the infamies of heathenism, and shall be brought to the same infamies again (2–7).

Yet how can the prophet refrain from lamenting over this doom, and more especially since it will reach to his native Judah, and even to the gate of Jerusalem? He expresses his anguish, or rather relieves its tension, in a series of paronomasias:

"In Gath (*Tell-town*) tell it not;
In Akko (*Weep-town*) weep not!
In Beth-le-Aphrah (*Dust-town*) roll thyself in dust.
Pass by, thou inhabitress of Shaphir (*Fair-town*) in nakedness and shame!
The citizen of Zaanan (*March-town*) marched not forth.
The mourning of Bethezel (*Neighbour-town*) taketh from you its standing-place.
The inhabitress of Maroth (*Bitter-town*) is in travail about good,
Because evil hath come down from Jehovah to the gate of Jerusalem.
Bind the chariot to the swift horse, thou inhabitress of Lachish (*Horse-town*);[1]
She was the beginning of sin for the daughter of Zion,
For the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.

[1] Still called Umm-Lakis.

Therefore will thou (Oh Zion) give dismissal (farewell presents) to
Moresheth-Gath (*The Possession of Gath*).
The houses of Achzib (*False-spring*) become *Achzab* (a disappointing
book) to Israel's kings.
Yet will I bring the heir (namely, Sargon, king of Assyria) to thee, thou
citizen of Mareshah (*Heir-town*).
Unto Adullam (*the wild beasts' cave*) shall the glory of Israel come![1]
Make thyself bald (Oh Zion) for the children of thy delight.
Enlarge thy baldness as the vulture,
For they are gone into captivity from thee" (i. 10–16).[2]

This passage suggests a curious psychological problem. Unlike the description of the advancing host in Isa. x. 28–34, it does not mark out a definite geographical route, though it mentions certain towns in the hill-country between Samaria and Jerusalem, and others which are nearer to the capital itself. The prophet, contemplating an advance of the Assyrian king through the towns of the Shephelah, takes the names of town after town chiefly in the neighbourhood of his own native village, and extorts from their sense, or even rom their mere assonances, an omen of mourning, failure, and woe. Such paronomasiæ, though little in accordance with modern English taste — though to some minds they suggest artificiality and childishness—are yet found in passages of noble and solemn import, and are very frequent in "the stately, grave tragedians" of Greece. They would have had a far deeper meaning in countries and ages filled with the conviction that the tongue does not move at random in the region of destiny, but that even in the physiological quality of words there often lies a depth of prophetic import. And if any one supposes that *real* grief could not express itself in forms which seem to him so unreal, I would refer him to the passage in which Shakespeare shows that the reverse is true. When King Richard II. visits John of Gaunt upon his deathbed, and addresses him as "Old Gaunt," the dying Duke replies:

"Old Gaunt, indeed, and gaunt in being old."

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[1] Perhaps, as Cheyne points out with a play on *ad olam*, "shall set *for ever*."

[2] Reuss says that the effect of these plays on words would be as if a French prophet were to write, "N'allez pas le dire à Dijon! N'allez pas pleurer à Ploermel! Pars Paris! Chartres attèle ton char!"

Surprised at such words, King Richard asks, almost with a touch of scorn,

"Can sick men play so nicely with their names?"

to which the Duke replies—

"No. Misery makes sport to mock itself."

As to the fulfilment of the prophecy, it came first in the invasion of Sargon, who (if we may trust his own annals) captured Samaria, B.C. 722, and who also claims to have conquered Judah.[1]

II. THE JUDGMENT RENDERED NECESSARY BY GUILT (chap. ii., iii.).

i. From the certainty of the judgment the prophet passes to the causes which have made it inevitable. He is a man of the people, and he finds those causes in the crimes of the rulers—in their calculating greed and covetous oppression. Therefore the Lord judges their evil devices by devising ruin for them, and will punish their oppression by bringing them under the oppressor. The spoilers shall be spoiled, and their land be divided among the heathen (ii. 1–5).

ii. The false prophets, or the greedy grandees, are indignant at such stern vaticinations, and angrily bid the true prophet to be silent (comp. Isa. xxx. 9, 10; Amos ii. 12; v. 10), and not to weary them with these incessant reproaches (ii. 6).

But the prophet indignantly replies that he cannot alter the eternal purpose of God, which is to bless the righteous and punish the unrighteous (ver. 7). He therefore pours forth a fresh and stronger denunciation against those who strip bare the poor, and afflict the widows, and so sin against God's glory. Let them depart from a land which they have polluted, and which should be their destruction (8–10).

iii. The level of popular and successful prophecy had now come to be to prophesy lies; to prophesy in praise of wine and strong drink was to ensure an audience (ver. 11).

[At this point the thread of the context is incomprehensibly broken by two verses (12, 13), which read like a sudden

[1] Perhaps there is a confusion between Sargon (whom the Jews had mostly forgotten) and Sennacherib in 2 Kings xviii. 13 (=Isa. xxxvi. 1). See Cheyne, p. 14.

promise of restoration under some victorious king.[1] Some have tried to explain these verses of a gathering of the multitude for destruction; or as the promises of the false prophets whom Micah has been denouncing. If the latter view be correct, the verses are a specimen of vivid dramatic interchange, and they represent the false optimism of an interested deceiver.[2] It seems more probable that either (1) they represent some later marginal gloss written originally at the side, perhaps from some other prophet, by a reader who grieved over the threat of doom—a gloss which in time found its way into the text;[3] or (2) that they are misplaced from some more suitable connexion.[4]]

For in the next chapter the prophet continues his remonstrance with no reference to this intervening clause, and addressing the princes and rulers, upbraids them with the almost cannibal ruthlessness of their grinding and defiant cruelty, ending with the menace that on the day of vengeance they should cry to God in vain (iii. 1–4).

iv. Then turning fiercely upon the false prophets once more, he upbraids them with crying peace only when they are fed,[5] and opposing those who disdain to bribe them. Darkness and judicial blindness should fall upon them, and the silence of God. But Micah, on the other hand, is inspired to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and unto Israel his sin (5–8).

v. In the next burst of reproof the bloodstained princes, the hireling priests, the bribe-taking prophets, in all their boast of heaven-protected security bred of religious formalism, are once more rebuked, and over them is pronounced the sweeping exceptionless prophecy which, as we learn from Jeremiah, produced so deep an impression on the nation.

"Therefore because of you shall Zion be plowed as a field,

[1] It is only "*the remnant* of Israel" which is to be restored. Samaria had already fallen.

[2] This is the opinion of Michaelis, Ewald, Hofmann, Kleinert, V. Orelli.

[3] C. H. Cornill regards these two verses as an addition made during or after the Exile.

[4] This is the view of Steiner, who places them after iv. 8. And it is true that Micah himself (iv. 6; v. 3), as well as other prophets (Hosea i. 10, 11), make similar promises to the nation, but with this difference—they announce that judgment and repentance must precede the promised prosperity.

[5] Comp. 1 Sam. ii. 13–16

and Jerusalem become ruins, and the hill of the temple as heights in the wood."

But sweeping and exceptionless as it sounds, the prophecy was never absolutely fulfilled. Like all prophecy, it dealt with *great eternal certainties which depended on conditions.* The repentance of Hezekiah, the moral reformation of the people, partial and disappointing as it proved to be, was yet adequate in God's mercy to prevent the immediate and complete accomplishment of the doom.

III. THE PROMISE OF BLESSING (iv., v.).

There is a distinction between the false utterances of prophets who only care to lull to sleep a guilty society, and the promises of the true prophets, who, while they do not conceal the certainty of retribution for sin, yet cling to the ultimate hope which springs from perfect trust in God. In these two chapters, Micah, while he still reverts to the doom which is inevitable, looks through the darkness to the golden dawn beyond it.

He begins with the bright picture of the Messianic days when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at the head of the mountains, and many nations shall flow to it (iv. 1–14). The rhythm and beauty of the prophecy had evidently caused it to sink deep into the minds of those who heard it, for it is in great part repeated verbatim by Isaiah,[1] who probably borrowed it from Micah, unless both alike adopted it from the remains of some older prophet.[2] It is a picture of triumph, of righteousness, and of peace, followed (6, 7) by the distinct promise of restoration from exile, and specially connected (8) with the glory of Migdal-Edar, the "Tower of the Flock," a place but little known, which lies between Jerusalem and Bethlehem,[3] and was probably connected with traditions of the House of David. It is true that as he gazes on the prophetic vision he hears the wailing of Zion as of a woman in travail. He does not disguise the truth that the deliverance must be preceded by a period of anguish, in which the people should be carried to Babylon before they could be redeemed from the hand of their enemies (9, 10).

The mention of Babylon is surprising. Unless all events are

[1] Isaiah omits verse 4 (Isa. ii. 2, 3).

[2] This is the conclusion adopted by Ewald, Hitzig, Nöldeke, Kuenen, Reuss, Cheyne, Ryssel.

[3] See Gen. xxxv. 21.

so foreshortened to the prophet's eye that intervals of time are wholly lost, the succeeding verses seem to promise an *immediate* triumph over insulting enemies. No such triumphs took place in the literal sense after the Babylonian captivity. The only thing which corresponds to them—and that only in the glowing hyperbole of Eastern poetry—is the deliverance of Hezekiah from the Assyrian invasion, and the humiliating retreat of Sennacherib, though even this could not be literally regarded as a fulfilment of the words that Zion should beat to pieces her enemies—even many peoples as with a horn of iron and hoofs of brass (11–13). In these passages, as on almost every page of Hebrew prophecy, the humble student who approaches the sacred page with a mind untrammelled by conventionalities sees, as we have been forced to see so often, that the language of prophecy is not the language of minute prevision; that it fortells the general events of history which happen in accordance with moral laws, and expresses the unshaken confidence of righteous souls in the mercy, no less than in the judgments, of God. But the attempt to explain its large utterances with mechanical literalness can only be carried out by casuistical exaggerations and practical falsification of genuine history. Nor can we be at all *certain* that the mention of Babylon in verse 10 was not the addition of the later age, when the Old Testament Books were re-edited after the captivity.[1] We find a similar interpolation of the words "*from Babylon*" in verse 8 (after "the kingdom shall come") in the Septuagint, and it is easy to see how such a marginal gloss might have crept into the text. It is indeed possible that Micah may have anticipated that Sargon would transfer into Babylonia some of the conquered inhabitants of Judah, as he very probably replaced by Israelites the defeated Babylonians whom he transplanted into Northern Israel (2 Kings xvii. 24). Babylon was at this time subject to the Assyrians, as is implied in v. 6. We are told in 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11 that the Assyrian generals sent King Manasseh bound to Babylon, and even Hezekiah had been threatened with the ultimate doom of a Babylonian exile (Isa. xxxix. 6). But if that solution of the problem be accepted, it still does not fit in with

[1] This is the view of Nöldeke, Kuenen, Cheyne, Nowack, &c. Stade thinks that large parts of these two chapters (iv., v.) are later than the Exile.

any reduction of Micah's words to a mechanical vaticination. For he goes on to say that Zion, deprived of her king, and brought to affliction, and cursed by her enemies, shall rise and stamp her foes to pieces. In what sense was that fulfilled as against the Assyrians, or against any enemies after the Babylonian captivity? The Jews had one or two very moderate victories in the course of centuries, but they remained on the whole, even down to their destruction, a people politically insignificant, and with scarcely a shadow of real independence. Since the repentance of Hezekiah altered the bearing of Micah's prophecy in its most definite and important particular, though it altered in no wise the great principle on which it was based, we are naturally led to the inference that the events which were described as the sequel of that main prophecy were also modified in their external and material aspects. Events were mutable because they were altered in accordance with man's varying deserts; the moral laws only were eternal because God changeth not.

The transitions of Hebrew prophecy—based as are its extant fragments upon the epitomes of scattered discourses —are often startlingly abrupt. The promise of Zion's triumph is instantly followed (v. 1) by a picture of her humiliation before a besieging conqueror, who smites the king of Israel on the cheek; and then, without a pause, there follows a prophecy of glorious Messianic prosperity. For a long-predestined ruler shall come forth from Bethlehem-Ephratah, after the travail-pangs are over, during which Judah will be delivered to her enemies (3). He shall stand and feed his flock, and be glorious, and be a personification of Peace (4); and when the Assyrian comes, Judah shall be able to raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes, who shall lay waste Assyria with the sword (5–6), while the remnant of Jacob shall be as a gracious rain among the nations, and shall ramp as a lion among her foes (7–9). And then there shall be in Judah no chariots, or horses, or fortresses, or large demoralizing towns, or sorceries, or pillars, or Asherahs; and God shall execute His vengeance on the disobedient heathen (10–15).

Thus the whole prophecy sweeps through the phases of retribution, of reformation, of deliverance dependent on reformation, and of the achievement of that deliverance by a divinely-appointed King. And in Micah we see the deepening conviction

that the Promised King shall be of the House of David, and shall add fresh glories to the insignificance of the village from which David sprang.

IV. THE FINAL CHAPTERS.

If it ended here the prophecy of Micah would be complete in itself. The two beautiful chapters which follow, with their one specially priceless passage (vi. 6–8), transport us into a somewhat different atmosphere, and a somewhat different style of prophetic writing. If in the earlier chapters we have the glowing springtide of hope, we have in these the paler autumn of disappointment. All things seem to be worse. The tone is not that of Isaiah, or of the earlier chapters, but more resembles that of Jeremiah or Habakkuk. All things are sinking into decay (vii. 1–6), and the threat of vengeance becomes once more terribly severe (vi. 13–15) in proportion to the openness of apostasy (vi. 16). Even in Jerome's time the chapters were interpreted by some as a complaint uttered by Christ Himself, or by the Apostles, of the small results which had followed from the redemption of mankind. Much that we find in these chapters, and especially the descriptions of commercial dishonesty (vi. 10, 11), flagrant idolatry (vi. 16), religious torpor (vii. 2), assassination (vii. 2), bribery (3), universal treachery (5), and domestic discord (6), do not seem applicable to the days of Hezekiah. Some have supposed—and among them Ewald—alike from the difference of style and the altered complexion of the circumstances that they are the fragments of an anonymous prophet, which had been incorporated with Micah's prophecy. If there be no proof of such a conjecture, yet certainly we see in these chapters, as Ewald has said, "the effects of the cold biting wind which King Manasseh brought over the kingdom of Judah." We see, too, that if Micah had ever looked for the near fulfilment of his promises of the triumph of Zion, he must have been taught by the course of events that the day of that promise could only lie in the far future. But, being a true prophet, he will not abandon his hope. He clings to it amid the storm of calamities and the lurid menace of the darkened horizon, and knew that if the vision tarried long, it yet should come to those who waited for it.

These two chapters take the form of a magnificent colloquy, and are indeed "the first prophetic piece of a purely dramatic plan and execution."

First the prophet summons the people to come and plead before God in the presence of the mountains, and calls on the listening mountains to be arbiters of the controversy (vi. 1–2).

Then the awful voice of Jehovah appeals to Israel as to the cause of his apostasy, reminding him of the mighty deliverance from the serfdom of Egypt, and the frustration of Balaam's sorceries, and all that happened on the journey from Shittim in Moab to Gilgal in Canaan, that he may acknowledge the righteousness of the Lord (3–5).

Then the conscience-stricken people asks the most awful of questions:

> "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
> Bow myself before the high God?
> Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings,
> With calves of a year old?
> Taketh Jehovah pleasure in thousands of rams,
> In ten thousands of rivers of oil?
> Shall I give my first-born for my guilt?
> The fruit of my body for the expiation of my soul?" (6–7).

The appeal shows radical misconception of the nature of God and of the sacrifices with which alone He is well-pleased. How should God be appeased with sacrifices when all the beasts of the forest are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? How should He pardon sin for the sake of self-torture, and the unjust immolation of the guiltless for the offender? He is neither to be bribed, nor—as though He were some fierce Moloch—to be satisfied with blood. Far different is the service which He approves; far purer and nobler the sacrifice which He desires. The prophet sees this, though it is hidden from a people steeped in corruption and thinking to be delivered from it by material offerings. He sees that Beneficence is the only acceptable ritual, and moral integrity the one Divine requirement.

> "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good,
> And what doth the Lord require of thee,
> But to do justly and to love mercy,
> And to walk humbly with thy God" (8).

It is the high spiritual lesson which apostatising churches find it so hard to learn, because it runs counter to the idolatry of external forms and functions. It is the lesson so firmly stated in the Book of Deuteronomy, and by so many of the

prophets to a people which ultimately developed into the most perilous extremes of unspiritual formalism. It is the lesson taught by St. Paul, and St. James, and St. John, and St. Peter, in every Epistle ; and by Christ Himself to Nicodemus and to all whom He taught.

When the prophet has uttered this great truth he pauses, and then suddenly cries—

> "Hark! Jehovah crieth to the city,
> (Surely it is wisdom to fear Thy name!)
> Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it" (9).

And then the Awful Voice is heard once more upbraiding the guilty people for scant measures, and deceitful balances, for violent mammon-worship, for lies which shall provoke terrible vengeance of spoliation and famine (10–15), and for the open Baal-idolatry which shall make them a desolation and a hissing (16).

Then the Jashar—the upright man who represents the ideal Israel—or possibly the prophet, as his spokesman, bewails the diminished number of the good amid the general bloodguiltiness, selfishness, and corruption of justice, which show that visitation is at hand (vii. 1–4) ; and the universal want of confidence even amid the nearest and dearest kinsmen (5, 6).

Then, as though the judgment has already fallen, we see the righteous community, sitting in darkness and desolation, but still finding hope and consolation in the belief that God will accept their submission and repentance, and will vindicate His name upon the insulting enemy (7–10).

Once more Jehovah utters His mingled doom and promise. Israel's walls shall be built, though at a far-off date ; and from Assyria, and Egypt, and the Euphrates, and the Mediterranean, the heathen should come to her—but before that day could come the land should be desolate, because of the deeds of its inhabitants (11–13).

Strong in this promise the prophet pleads to God for its fulfilment, and even in praying expresses his assurance that God will grant his prayer (14–17). He ends with a brief lyric passage in order to close his varied words of menace and promise with the music of untroubled Hope and Faith.

> "Who is a God like unto Thee who pardoneth iniquity,
> And passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?

He retaineth not His anger for ever,
Because He delighteth in mercy.
He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us;
He will tread down our iniquities;
And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.
Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, the mercy to Abraham,
Which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."
(18–20).

The times in which these chapters were written, whether by Micah or another, were evidently times of the darkest omen, but to him, as to all the prophets,

"On the glimmering summit far-withdrawn,
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn."

CHAPTER XIII.

NAHUM.

Nahum, his name and birthplace—Unique character of his prophecy—Sketch of the history of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser I., Asshurnazipal, Shalmenezer II., Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Asshurbanipal—Fall of Nineveh—Her cruelty and brutality—Outline of Nahum's prophecy—Its fulfilment.

OF Nahum, as of most of the other Minor Prophets, we know almost nothing. When we have said that Nahum means "Compassion" and that the prophet was an Elkoshite—that is, in all probability the inhabitant of a little Galilean village, which in St. Jerome's time bore the name of Elcesi,[1] we have said practically everything which can be recorded. The name Capernaum means "the Village of Nahum," and some have consequently inferred his connection with the town on the Sea of Galilee which was "exalted to heaven" as a witness of the life and miracles of Christ.[2] Rabbi Schwarz[3] said that there was a grave of Nahum about an hour's journey north of Tiberias, but no other traveller has mentioned it. On the contrary, a more common, though equally uncertain, tradition connects him with Mosul, where Benjamin of Tudela, about 1170, saw his synagogue and his tomb.[4] Perhaps the tradition was strengthened by the name Alkosh, a place near Mosul, which was long a seat of the Nestorian Patriarchs. Ewald, accepting this tradition, supposed that the prophet had lived in Assyria, and that some of the curious and difficult words which occur in his prophecy[5] are of Assyrian origin; but this theory has found no support from

[1] Now Elkôzah (Map of Palestine Exploration Fund, 1880).

[2] Hitzig. [3] "D. Heil. Land," p. 149.

[4] See Layard's "Nineveh," i. 233. The house containing the tomb is a modern building.

[5] *E.g.*, *Taphs'rîm*, iii. 17, and *Huzzab*, ii. 7.

the independent inquiries of the Cuneiform scholars. It is more probable that he was a prophet born in Galilee.[2]

Others again have arrived at a similar conclusion because they supposed that Nahum would have been unable to describe the doom of Nineveh in language so pictorially vivid if he had not been an eyewitness of the scenes to which he referred. But though the battles, both within and without the gates, are depicted with some local knowledge and with broad effective strokes, the historic allusions are indistinct,[3] and there is no more necessity to suppose that he had witnessed the destruction of Nineveh than that he had seen the siege of No-Ammon or Thebes by Assurbanipal, which he also describes, of which we only know historically from the Assyrian monuments. It occurred about B.C. 664.[3]

We infer from his prophecy that he predicted the fall of Nineveh on the sure ground of faith in the Divine righteousness which governs the world's history. Further than this we can only say that he seems from internal evidence to have lived in the Kingdom of Judah; and that from i. 15, ii. 1, we may suppose that he wrote in the days of Manasseh when the Jews had not yet fully recovered from the recent Assyrian invasion. Manasseh (B.C. 698–643) was a tributary of Asshurbanipal, and during some years of his life was a prisoner in Babylon.

It is the almost unique peculiarity of Nahum's prophecy that it is devoted to a single theme—the destruction of the bloody and rapacious City and Empire of Nineveh, with all its gods.[1]

[1] The word for "prancing steeds" in iii. 2, is found elsewhere only in the song of the northern prophetess Deborah (Judg. v. 22).

[2] See Dr. W. Robertson Smith, in the "Encyclopædia Britannica." G. Smith's "History of Assyria," pp. 55, 70.

[4] Renan has some forcible remarks on Nineveh:—"C'était la première apparition de la force militaire dans le monde; le résultat fût un despotisme brutal, que ne paraît avoir animé ancune idée morale ni religieuse" ("Hist. du Peuple d'Isr.," 454). He adds—"Des kilomètres de bas-reliefs, d'un réalisme effrayant, nous montrent à l'œuvre ce vieux militarisme, avec sa poliorcétique avancée, la simplicité de ses idées, la barbarie de ces mœurs. La cruauté est ici comme chez les Peaux-Rouges une force et un mobile. Des scènes de torture sont représentées avec autant de soin et d'amour que des scènes de victoire . . . Le Roi est le Dieu veritable . . . or on est bien fort, selon cette logique de sauvages, quand on voit son ennemi écorché vif à ses pieds. . . . L'empire assyrien paraît n'avoir rien fait que du mal" (Id. 455). So monstrous an apparition

Of the sins of Israel or Judah he has nothing to say. Nineveh stood in the eyes of the Jews as the most brutal type of heathenish abomination (iii. 4), and it was the special mission of this prophet to denounce and describe its headlong fall. And as the name of Assyria meets us so often in the pages of Hebrew prophecy, we may seize this opportunity of briefly sketching an outline of its history.

The name Assyria is derived from *Ausshur*, which in the Accadian language means "a well-watered plain." The country occupied the great region between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and the chief cities were Hit, Asshur, Kaleh, and Nineveh.[1] Asshur was the name of the supreme god, and all wars and cruelties are ascribed to his commands. When Asshurbanipal cuts off the head of the king of Elam, and cuts the limbs of his enemies to pieces, and gives them to be devoured by dogs and vultures, he does it all "to satisfy the hearts of the great gods, my lords," of whom the king was regarded as a priest.

The shepherd kings were expelled from Egypt about B.C. 1662, and Thothmes III. in seventeen years fought fourteen victorious campaigns. A great victory at Megiddo opened his path to the Euphrates, and about B.C. 1584, we find that a chieftain of Assuru gave him tribute of cedar-trees, armlets, and lapis-lazuli. In this campaign he also conquered the wealthy Hittites (*Khetas*), from whom, besides thirty-one chariots plated with gold, he took one of solid gold.[2] The Hittite Empire did not finally perish till B.C. 700, after it had lasted 3000 years.

necessarily evoked the most strange and terrible misgivings in the orderly and faithful soul of just Hebrews. "La brutalité, la violence devenaient maîtresses du monde. Ces stupides et cruels hoplites qui marchent en rangs serrés à la conquête de l'Asie sont l'antipode de l'homme juste et responsable, tel que l'auteur du livre de Job, par example, le conçoit."

[1] See Gen. x. 10–12, where we are told of Nimrod that the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech (now Warka), Accad, and Calneh; and that Asshur went forth out of Shinar (*i.e.*, North-Western Chaldea), and built Nineveh, and Ir Rehoboth, and Calah (Nimrud), and Resen (*Reseni*, *i.e.*, spring-head). Nineveh corresponds to *Kouyunjik* and *Neby Yunus*, Asshur to *Kalah Sherghat*. Assyria was about 350 miles long, and 300 broad; as large as Great Britain.

[2] See Menant, "Annales des Rois d'Assyrie" (1876); Duncker, "Gesch d. Alterth. II. 382; Schrader, "Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament," 450; Oppert, "Hist. des Empires de Chaldie et d'Assyrie;" "Records of the past;" "Assyria," in the Story of the Nations, 2nd edition, 1888.

We have no narrative Assyrian inscription before B.C. 1100. Babylon—mentioned on the monuments as Kur Dunyash[1]—was at constant feud with Assyria, but in 1450 there was a treaty between the two countries.

Kalah (Larissa, Birs Nimroud) was built by Shalmaneser I. before B.C. 1300. His son conquered Babylon, but not permanently, for the Babylonians got possession of his signet-ring with its proud inscription "Conqueror of Kur Dunyash," and is was not recovered by Sennacherib till 600 years later.

TIGLATH-PILESER I., about B.C. 1100, conquered the Nairi (Kurdistan) and left his rock sculpture near the sources of the Tigris. He boasts that he conquered eighty-three of their kings, and strewed the mountains with the corpses of their warriors.[2] After his wide-spread conquests he became a great builder, fortifier, civilizer, lion-slayer, and hunter after curiosities. But in later life he was worsted in a struggle with Babylon and taken captive.

His dynasty seems to have lasted about eight hundred years; but for some two hundred years afterwards we know nothing of his successors.

The ancient glories of Assyria were revived about B.C. 884 by ASSURNAZIPAL, who calls himself "the king, the lord, the exalted, the revered, the gigantic, the hero, the mighty, the stalwart, a lion, a destroyer of cities, a treader down of foes." He vaunts his unheard-of savagery—how he dyed the mountains of the Nairi with blood like wool; how he flayed captive kings alive, and dressed pillars with their skins, and walled-up others alive, and impaled them on stakes; how he burnt boys and girls in the fire, put out eyes, cut off hands, feet, noses, and ears. And the Assyrian kings always profess to do this "at the command of Asshur;" the enemies whose tongues they pull out, and whose limbs they fling to dogs, bears, vultures, and eagles are always "enemies of Asshur." He had himself represented piling up the heads of his enemies. He fought ten campaigns, and built many palaces.

The first contact of Assyria with Israel took place in the reign of his son SHALMANESER II., B.C. 860–824. This king was the incessant drudge of his own military greatness, but

[1] Its original Accadian name was *Ca-dimirra*, which was translated into its Semitic equivalent, Bab-El, "Gate of God" (Sayce).

[2] He boasts, "I had no rival in battle; I enlarged my territory."

details his brutalities with less sickening self-complacency. In 854 *Hadidri* (Benhadad II.) of Damascus, with the king of Hamath, and *Akhabu Sirlai* (*i.e.*, AHAB of Israel), and nine other princes, aided by Egypt and Ammon, and all united by a terrible common danger, made a confederacy against him; and though he claims to have slain 20,500 men in a great victory he seems to have received a series of checks. But in 842 he frightfully defeated the usurper Hazael and received tribute from Jahua (JEHU) who is called "a king of *Khumri*," though he had destroyed the house of Omri. This fact is not mentioned in the Bible, but Jehu is represented offering his tribute of gold, silver, &c., on the Black Obelisk in the British Museum.

After the reigns of five successors this dynasty was ended by a revolution headed by PUL or TIGLATH-PILESER II., B.C. 745–727. This king was an organizer as well as a conqueror, and began the policy of deporting populations from one spot to another, as also the use of subordinate generals (Tartan). He took Arpad after a three years' siege, and received tribute from Menahem in 738. Ahaz, king of Judah, bribed him to take up arms against Syria and Israel. He put Pekah to death, and elevated Hoshea in his place, but deported most of the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria. He routed Rezin, took Damascus, was waited on by vassal kings, and received the submission of Merodach Baladan, king of Babylon. He died B.C. 727.[1]

In the reign of his son SHALMANESER IV., Hoshea, king of Israel, relying on So, the Ethiopian king of Egypt, conspired against Assyria and was taken captive. The siege of Samaria was completed by SARGON about B.C. 722. He was perhaps a rebel general. After various conquests over Karkhemish, Ashdod, and other places, he was murdered in 704 by an unknown assassin.[2]

[1] In an inscription of the year 738 he says: "The land of Beth-Khumri. PAKAHIAH their king they had slain. HUSIH I appointed over them to the kingdom. Ten talents of gold, 1000 of silver, I received as their tribute." A little later he says that some Arab queen fled to some arid place "like an ass of the desert" (comp. Hos. viii. 9).

[2] See Isa. xx. 1. "Sargon I. was a great patron of literature, and caused the books of his Accadian predecessors to be translated and edited." He conquered Egypt and Philistia in 719 at the Battle of Raphia. He claims to have conquered Cyprus, and his effigy has been found at Idalium.

SENNACHERIB, whom Nahum (ii. 1) calls "the breaker in pieces," was the first of the Sargonidæ, and reigned for twenty-five years. Hezekiah's rebellion against him was made in reliance on the Ethiopian Tirhakah, whose promised help gave the ascendency to the war party in Hezekiah's court.

Sennacherib defeated Tirhakah at Eltaku about 701;[1] punished the rulers of Ekron who, on revolting against Sennacherib, had handed over their king, Padi, to Hezekiah; overran Judah, and shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage." He claims to have received from Hezekiah thirty talents of gold, three hundred of silver, with precious stones and other ransoms, including Hezekiah's harem and eunuchs.[2] These were sent to Lachish. Sennacherib, after capturing many towns and villages, sent 200,150 Jews into captivity, and despatched his celebrated embassy of his general (Tartan), chamberlain (Rab-saris), and cup-bearer (Rab-shakeh), to Hezekiah. After the disaster of his army (2 Kings xviii.) he returned home, and the next year fought against the Babylonians, who had revolted with the aid of the Elamites. His murder took place twenty years later (B.C. 681). The two sons who murdered him were ultimately subdued by his successor, their younger brother, Esarhaddon, in 680, at Khanirabat.

ESARHADDON—perhaps the "cruel lord" of Isa. xix. 4—conquered Egypt in 672, and set up Pharaoh Necho. He has been called "the noblest and most gracious figure among Assyrian kings," and took captive Manasseh, king of Judah, whom he carried to Babylon, where for six months of the year he held his court. About 670 he shared his throne with his son Asshur-bani-pal, and died two years later.

ASSHUR-BANI-PAL[3] defeated Tirhakah, put an end to the Ethiopian dynasty of Egypt, and took No-Ammon—No of the god Amun—as mentioned in Nahum iii. 8. His description of his own atrocities is complacently cruel. He tells us how he tore off the lips and hands of kings, and compelled a prince to wear round

[1] The battle was not a decided victory.

[2] In an inscription on clay in the British Museum (Bellino's Cylinder) Sennacherib records his ruinous overthrow of Judah. "All his broad country I swept like a mighty whirlwind; thirty-four great cities I ravaged, destroyed, burnt with fire. The smoke of their burning like a mighty cloud obscured the face of high heaven."

[3] "Sardanapalus" seems to be a corruption of this name.

his neck the decapitated head of his king. At his triumph he was dragged along by three kings of Elam yoked to his war-chariot. In a sculpture now in the British Museum he is represented sitting at a banquet with his queen and gazing on the head of Nabubelzikri the Chaldean king, who had committed suicide.

But these last acts of Assyrian insolence and tyranny met with a speedy retribution, and heralded the irretrievable fall of the bloody city. It is probable that there were only two more kings, whose names are uncertain. The great Scythian invasion, alluded to in Jeremiah iv., v., vi., succeeded in burning the Assyrian palaces and plundering the ruins. But Cyaxares massacred the Scythian leaders at a banquet, and the army was bribed to depart. It went away and disappears from history. In the days of a king usually called Esarhaddon II., Cyaxares, with the aid of the Babylonians and Nabopolassar their rebel virceoy, besieged and took Nineveh not later than B.C. 608.[1]

The reason of the fall of Nineveh was that but few genuine Assyrians were left. The country "had been slowly bleeding to death" in consequence of its own wars and deportations.

What wonder then that "the gates of the land were set wide open to the enemies, and the fire devoured its bars"? "And thus," says the author of the "Story of Assyria," "with his own weight, with his own wickedness and folly, Asshur fell. It was a grievous fall and an utter fall."

But all mankind naturally rejoiced at the disappearance of this foul and horrible apparition which for more than five centuries had afflicted the nations. The Ninevites live before us still upon their sculptures with their thick-set powerful, sensual figures, their calm, settled ferocity, their frightful nonchalance in the enactment of diabolical atrocities, the exuberance in them of all the brutal parts of man's nature.[2] They thought themselves unassailable in their capital with its 1,200 towers and their wall a hundred feet high, and so broad that three chariots could drive on it abreast. But they were swept away, and the nations shouted for joy.

Nebuchadrezzar, who founded the greatness of the Babylonian Empire, was married to a daughter of Cyaxares the Mede.

Such was Nineveh. Judged from the vaunting inscriptions

[1] The exact date of the destruction of Nineveh is unknown, but took place between 626 and 608.

[2] See Kitto's "Scripture Lands," p. 50.

of her kings, no power more useless, more savage, more terrible, ever cast its gigantic shadow on the page of history as it passed on the way to ruin. The kings of Assyria tormented the miserable world. They exult to record how "space failed for corpses"; how unsparing a destroyer is their goddess Ishtar; how they flung away the bodies of soldiers like so much clay; how they made pyramids of human heads; how they sacrificed holocausts of the sons and daughters of their enemies; how they burned cities; how they filled populous lands with death and devastation; how they reddened broad deserts with carnage of warriors; how they scattered whole countries with the corpses of their defenders as with chaff; how they impaled "heaps of men" on stakes, and strewed the mountains and choked rivers with dead bones; how they cut off the hands of kings and nailed them on the walls, and left their bodies to rot with bears and dogs on the entrance gates of cities; how they employed nations of captives in making bricks in fetters; how they cut down warriors like weeds, or smote them like wild beasts in the forests, and covered pillars with the flayed skins of rival monarchs.

And this is the power upon which Nahum, filled with unshaken faith in the Eternal Righteousness, is commissioned to pronounce the doom of God. The book of his vision is appropriately called "the burden" or "oracle of Nineveh." The prophecy naturally falls into three great divisions, which deal with God and His enemies, the Fall of Nineveh, and the Guilt which drew down the vengeance. It may also be divided into eight strophes of nearly equal length.

1. The prophet begins by laying down the general principle that Jehovah is a jealous and a revenging God, who, although He is slow to anger, can never leave crime unpunished. His awful power is seen in the storm and the earthquake, and the Simoom; how then can the guilty stand before Him? (i. 1–6).

2. The general principle is then applied to Nineveh. God is a refuge to His faithful ones, but will destroy *her*—Nineveh—with an overswelling flood.* For is He not Jehovah? Are not His strokes final? Can the drench of drunkenness, or the close com-

* See ii. 6. The immediate fall of Nineveh was caused by an inundation of the Tigris (not, as Ktesias says, the Euphrates). The account of Ktesias is preserved by Diodorus Siculus. The Tigris was outside of Nineveh, and the Khausser ran through the city.

pact of His enemies when they are folded together like intertwisted thorns, save them from His destroying fire?[1] And *this* blow shall be final. Had not Sennacherib, who devised evil against Jehovah, been mown down with all his host?[2] There shall be one more humiliation of Nineveh, and it shall be the last[3] (i. 7–12).

3. In the next strophe the prophet alternately addresses Judah and Nineveh. To Judah is promised deliverance from the yoke; to Nineveh is threatened the overthrow of all her princes and her gods.[4] Judah is bidden to observe the approach of the messenger of good tidings, to keep her feasts and pay her vows in safety. Nineveh is warned that the hammer of a foreign foe, in spite of all her warlike preparations, is approaching to destroy her. For the Lord restoreth the excellency of Jacob[5] as the excellency of Israel in recompence for the robbery of the heathen spoilers who laid waste her vines (i. 13–ii. 2).

4. We then have a picture of extraordinary vividness, representing the siege and sack of the city. Outside the walls are gathered the Medes; their shields are brightly painted; their robes are of purple;[6] terrible is the gleam of steel from their scythed chariots,[7] and the glitter of their brandished spears. Inside the city all is confusion. The chariots are rattling through the streets, and flashing hither and thither like lightning. Then the king bethinks him of his nobles, but they stagger about as they hurry without order to the walls, where the mantlet of the enemy has already been prepared.[8] It is too late. The

[1] Ewald and Hitzig take it to mean "Though they are compact as a hedge of thorns." Nineveh was surprised while the king and his captains were revelling (Diod. Sic. ii. 26). Compare the fates of Benhadad (2 Kings i. 16), and Belshazzar (Dan. v. 1-30).

[2] Sennacherib is probably intended by the Belial-counsellor of i. 11.

[3] The true rendering of i. 12 seems to be "though they (the Ninevites) be in full strength" (R. V., not "quiet" as in the A. V., which gives no sense), &c. The rest of the verse is a promise to Jerusalem (i. 14).

[4] The last king of Nineveh was a great-grandson of Sennacherib, to whose murder in the temple of Nisroch there is perhaps an allusion.

[5] Not "hath turned away," as in A. V., but "bringeth again," as in R. V. [6] Comp. Xen. "Cyr.," i. 3, § 2; viii. 3, § 1.

[7] Lit. "the chariots are with fire of steels."

[8] For "defence" (A. V.) in ii. 5 read "storming-shed," or "mantelet" as in R. V. (*Vined*). The battering-rams under the mantlet, as used by besiegers, are represented in the Ninevite sculptures (Rawlinson, "Ancient Monarchies," ii. 470).

gates of the streams have been opened, the palace is in commotion; Huzzab the Queen[1] is taken captive, and lifted on a chariot to be carried into captivity, while like a flock of doves her maidens moan around her, tabouring upon their breasts. The populace of Nineveh is multitudinous as the waters,[2] but it is of no avail. "Stand! stand!" they cry to the warriors, but they turn not from their headlong flight (ii. 3–8).

5. The city is sacked. "Rob ye silver, rob ye gold," shout the Median soldiers to one another, for there is no end to the mass of precious vessels. And so the city becomes empty and void, and waste[3] while the knees of its inhabitants smite together, and all loins tremble, and all faces are ghastly with fear. Is this the lions' home? where is the great lion who preyed for his whelps and struggled for his lioness, and filled his lairs with ravin?[4] The hour of judgment has come. The voice of Nineveh's imperious ambassadors shall no more terrify the nations! For God is against her. The fire shall burn her chariots, and the sword devour her lion-people. Woe to the bloody city so full of lies, and violence, and endless robbery (ii. 9–iii. 1).

6. Fresh chariots are rushing against her with whips, and clashing wheels, and prancing steeds, and glittering swords and flashing spears; and the heaps of corpses are the only encumbrance in their path. For the city has deserved her doom by her harlotries and enchantments, her idolatry and greedy merchandise. The harlot shall be stripped and spurned. All who see her shall fly from her with a cry of astonishment for her hopeless desolation (iii. 2–7).

[1] Nothing is known of the word "Huzzab," which the Rabbis suppose to be the queen's name. Some render it "It is decided!" *actum est!*

[2] The LXX. favours a slight correction which would mean that Nineveh has now become like a pool of waters.

[3] In the original there is a play of words *bukah um' bukah, um' bullukah*. "Sack, and sacking, and ransacking" (Prof. Gandell).

[4] Nineveh so completely disappeared that Xenophon scarcely recognized it ("Anab." iii. 12), and Alexander marched by "not knowing that a world-empire was buried under his feet." Lucian wrote, "Nineveh is perished, and there is no trace left where once it was." Gibbon, cxlvi., describing the battle fought on the vacant site, A.D. 62, says, "The city and even the ruins of the city had long disappeared." The traveller Niebuhr in 1766 passed over the site without knowing it. It first began to be revealed to the world after 1842 by Layard and Botta.

7. For why should Nineveh expect a better fate than mighty Thebes (No-Ammon),[1] which was also enthroned upon waters, with the sea-like Nile for her rampart, and with Kush and Egypt and Put and the Libyans for her allies? Yet her children were dashed in pieces by the Assyrians at the corners of the streets,[2] and her nobles sold by lot into captivity, and her princes bound in chains. So should Nineveh lie helpless as a drunkard, and her fortresses be as figs shaken down from the bough. Her people should be weak as women among her enemies, her gates should be burst open, and the flames should devour their bars (iii. 8–13).[3]

8. They may take all the pains they can to prepare for resistance by building ramparts and citadels, but they are doomed to fire. Their foes are like devouring locusts. In spite of every effort their multitudes shall be scattered with their princes and captains[4] like locusts, when the sun shines on them and they spread their wings for flight.[5] For king and nobles are buried in sottish somnolence, and their people are scattered shepherdless on the mountains. Nineveh has received her death-wound, and all who hear her fate clap their hands with exultation, because her wickedness has poured over them like an unbroken flood (iii. 14–19).

We may observe that the Book of Nahum furnishes us with one of the finest examples of Hebrew prophetic poetry in all its lyric beauty and pictorial vividness. It is less directly spiritual than the prophecies of Hosea, Isaiah, or Micah, yet it forcibly brings before us God's moral government of the world, and the duty of trust in Him as the Avenger of wrong-doers, the sole source of security and peace to those who love Him.[6] "The

[1] Called by the Greeks Diospolis. The allusion is to the sack of Thebes by Asshurbanipal about 665 (Rawlinson, "Ancient Monarchies," ii. 203). The king's boastful account of the victory over Ur-damani is given in Schrader, "Keilinschriften," p. 288.

[2] Comp. 2 Kings viii. 12; Isa. xiii. 16; Hos. x. 14; xiii. 16.

[3] The remains of the palaces of Nineveh are all scathed with fire.

[4] The word rendered "captains," is *taphs'rîm*.

[5] The verses 15–17 are a little confused, but (1) the swords of the enemy, (2) the multitudes of Ninevites, are compared to locust swarms, which (1) devour and (2) are numberless. "The heathen conqueror rehearsed his victory, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.' The prophet goes further as the issue of all human conquest, 'I disappeared'" (Pusey).

[6] Nah. i. 7, 15.

peculiarly pathetic element in this book," says Ewald, "is the way in which the evident danger of Nineveh is viewed in its relation to eternal truths."

Nahum's threats against Nineveh were remarkably fulfilled. Before the year B.C. 606 she had ceased to exist, for Jeremiah (xxv. 19–26) does not mention Nineveh among the nations which are doomed to drink the cup of the Lord. Esarhaddon II., whom the Greeks call Sarakos, was the last king of Nineveh. The Medes with the Babylonians and Scythians first rased all the surrounding fortresses (Nah. iii. 12), and beleaguered the city. The Ninevites proclaimed a fast of one hundred days to propitiate their gods (comp. Jonah iii. 5), but the city fell. The description of the siege by Ktesias accords with the brief allusions of Nahum. The last night of the besieged was spent in drunken orgies (Nah. i. 10; ii. 5), in which the effeminate king set the example. Only at the last moment did he arouse himself to give directions for the protection of the city from assault. The catastrophe was precipitated by an overflow of the Tigris, which made a breach in the walls (i. 18; ii. 7), and then the king, recognizing his destiny, burnt himself alive in his palace (iii. 15–19), and the city was plundered of its rich spoil (ii. 10–14). It vanished from history totally, and at once—in the energetic words of Strabo (xvi. 1, 3) *ἠφανίσθη παραχρῆμα*—so that those who passed over its ruins saw the visible proofs of the wrath of God.[1] The wrecks of its former splendour began to be revealed to the world in 1842, and its history has only been slowly recovered during the last twenty years.

[1] Xen. "Anab." iii. 4, 7; see V. Orelli, p. 324.

CHAPTER XIV.

ZEPHANIAH.

Zephaniah—His date—His style—His object—His characteristics—Diminution of originality—Outline of the Book—The Menace—The Admonition—The Promise—Conclusion.

THE biography of Zephaniah is absolutely blank.[1] He gives us his genealogy for four generations in the first verse, and from this it appears that he was a great-grandson of Hezekiah—apparently of King Hezekiah, and, therefore, a collateral descendant of the House of David. He also furnishes us with the date at which he wrote—"In the days of Josiah, son of Amon, king of Judah."[2] The title probably came from his own hand, and it accords with all that we should have inferred from external evidence. Josiah began to reign, B.C. 640. His great reformation took place in the eighteenth year of his reign, and it is clear that Zephaniah must have written before it was undertaken in full earnest, since otherwise the dark picture which he draws of the condition of Jerusalem would not have been justified. We may fix the date of his prophecy about B.C. 630, before the destruction of Nineveh, which took place in 625.[3] Josiah attempted a partial reform in the twelfth year of his reign, and had begun "to seek after the God of David his father" in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young (2 Chron. xxxiv. 2). Hence, Zephaniah only speaks of "the *remnant* of Baal" (i. 4), and implies that many still paid a nominal worship to Jehovah. We might be surprised that when the Book of the Law was found (2 Kings xxii. 8), Josiah sent to the prophetess Huldah, and not to Zephaniah. But we do not

[1] The name means "one whom Jehovah hides" (comp. Psa. xxvii. 3). It occurs as the name of "the second priest," or rather, "a priest of the second order," in 2 Kings xxv. 18. An apocryphal prophecy assigned to him was extant in the second century (Clem. Alex. "Strom.," v. 11, § 78)

[2] About B.C. 642-610. [3] For Nineveh is threatened in ii. 13.

know at what age he began to prophesy, and by that time he may have been dead.

The style of Zephaniah is forcible,[1] but his prophetic message is far less definite than that of Isaiah. Isaiah wrote under the pressure of immense political events, and deals directly with the Assyrian invasion. The menaces of Zephaniah are vague and general. Jerusalem and the surrounding heathen nations shall all be punished for their iniquities, but he does not say who the avenger shall be. No name is given to the foreign conquerors who are to inflict the judgment of God. Ewald supposes with confidence that the prophet was thinking of the great invasion of Scythians, who, according to Herodotus, marched against Nineveh, interrupted its blockade by the Medes, overran Asia Minor (of which Herodotus says that they were masters for twenty-eight years), and advanced by sea as far as Egypt.[2]

The historic notices of these invaders are later than the date at which Zephaniah wrote, but rumours had, perhaps, reached Jerusalem of threatened convulsions from some great movement of the nations.

Probably, however, Zephaniah neither intended nor desired to be definite. He, too, is the prophet of inevitable laws; an announcer of that light which shines so quietly, but ultimately reveals all things "in the slow history of their ripening." All the Hebrew prophets have certain great fundamental ideas in common. Even Isaiah, original as he is, sometimes echoes the phrases of Amos and Hosea; and Jeremiah frequently borrows or adapts the expressions of his predecessors. Zephaniah, whose prophecy is more secondary and reproductive, borrows not only principles but details. He assumes that history will repeat itself in fresh catastrophes, followed by new reformations and restorations, since the calamity of the Ninevite invasion had not produced a genuine reform, and the deliverance then promised was still incomplete. His eschatology is spiritual and ethical; and he predicts, not only the vindication of righteousness, but the triumph of Jehovah's love. But his book is on the model

[1] See the fine passages, ii. 13-15, iii. 14-17; and there are many striking phrases, as in i. 12, ii. 11, iii. 5-9.

[2] "Herodotus" i. 15, 103–106; iv. 10-12. Ewald, "Hist. of Israel," iii. "Dichter des A. B." i. 196 (on Psa. lix). Duncker, "Gesch. d. Alt.," ii. 464. This opinion is rejected by Nöldeke (Schenkel's "Bibel. Lex." iii. 388), Keil on Jer. iv. 5, &c. Some have seen in the name Scythopolis (Bethshan), a trace of this movement.

of those left by his predecessors. Threatening, exhortation, and promise are interwoven with triple strands into his pages as into theirs.

"With the prophet Zephaniah," says Ewald, "we meet for the first time a considerable diminution of prophetic originality; he repeats a good deal, almost verbally, from older prophets; and, on the other hand, the style is sometimes very ornate and pointed (ii. 1, 2; iii. 11–18). What is new is especially the extended survey of all lands and nations, and the general review of the spiritual affairs and prospects of the whole earth, the destruction of Jerusalem being only incidentally foretold. We see that the small separate nation, with its ancient national distinctions, must necessarily lose itself more and more in the general life of the nations of the earth; whilst, nevertheless, the truths which had lived in it remain the same, and gain ever greater validity in and through all nations."

The general outline of the book is very simple. In the first chapter the prophet announces a great day of the wrath of the Lord (i. 1–18). He then calls upon the various peoples, and especially upon Jerusalem, to repent, mingling his appeals with stern denunciations of judgment (ii. 1–iii. 7). Finally, he promises to the nations generally, and specially to Zion, a day of restoration, and calls on them to rejoice in the coming deliverance.

I. THE MENACE (i. 1–18).

After the heading (i. 1), he opens with a singularly sweeping threat: "I will utterly consume all things from off the earth, saith the Lord" (i. 2). Man and beast, bird and fish, man and his idols shall alike be cut off (ver. 3). Then the curse rushes down specifically upon Judah and Jerusalem for their idolatry. Three classes of false worshippers shall perish, namely, (1) Idolaters; the remnant of Baal-worshippers, the *Chemarîm*,[1] *i.e.*, the black-robed unlawful priests, together with the unworthy priests of Jehovah (*Kohanîm*), and those who bow down to the stars upon the housetops (vers. 4, 5); (2) Waverers: those who mingle their oaths to Jehovah with oaths to their Moloch (ver. 5); and (3) Apostates and open despisers of Jehovah (ver. 6). Be still before Jehovah, for the day is near; He has prepared a sacrifice, and consecrated them that are called to it, those namely who are to slay the victims.[2]

[1] The same word is used in 2 Kings xxiii. 5; Hos. x. 5.

[2] Comp. Isa. xiii. 3.

On that day will God punish all the ministers of violence and deceit, whether high or low.[1] The enemy shall enter from the north by the fish gate, and a cry of terror shall roll before him from the new quarters of the city, and from the surrounding hills. The inhabitants of Maktesh (the Mortar)—a region of the city so-called—are bidden to howl because the money-makers and the traders, here (perhaps contemptuously) called Canaanites, are cut off (vers. 9–11). God will search Jerusalem with lamps, and the rich men who have settled on their lees and deny the providence of God shall be punished. Their goods shall become a booty, their lands and houses a desolation (vers. 12, 13).

Yes, the day is near. The heroes wail, for it is a day of distress and darkness, and trumpets and siege (vers. 14–16), in which they shall stagger like blind men, and be destroyed, and their silver and gold shall perish with them in the universal conflagration (vers. 17, 18).

II. THE ADMONITION (ii. 1–iii. 7).

Turn pale, ye that never turned pale before![2] Swift as the rolling chaff before the wind the day comes on, and there is still time for the meek, the just, and the humble to escape (ii. 1–3). And how deep is the need for the warning! The small neighbouring states—Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron; the Cherethites, Canaan, Philistia, are all threatened by the impending ruin (vers. 4–7).[3] Moab, too, and Ammon shall be visited for their scorn and pride towards the Lord's people, to whom their lands shall be forfeited (vers. 8–10). Their idols

[1] "Every one who springeth over the threshold" (9) is usually explained to mean the worshippers of Dagon, with reference to the fact (1 Sam, v. 5) that his priests never stepped on—

"the grunsel edge
Where he fell flat, and shamed his worshippers."

But the context and the phrase seem rather to point to thieves and dishonest royal servants, who enter houses with violence to extort and to suppress.

[2] The meaning of this verse is most uncertain. It may be, "Set yourselves to be ashamed; yea, be ashamed (Cheyne. Comp. Isa. xlvi. 8), oh nation that turneth not pale." The "O nation not desired" of the A. V. is rendered in the LXX. by Ἔθνος ἀπαίδευτον.

[3] In the original there is a play or assonance on some of these names of peoples, and the punishment threatened to them, *e.g.*, *Azzah, azubah; Eqron, teaquer* (V. Orelli renders Gaza, *vergessene;* Ekron, *ausgeackert*).

shall be shattered, that all the isles of the heathen may do Him homage (ver. 11). The Ethiopians also and the Assyrians shall be smitten, and Nineveh shall be a desolation; "pelicans and hedgehogs shall pass the night upon her capitals, the owl will sing in the window, the crow upon the threshold, 'Crushed, desolated.'" In spite of all her joyous haughtiness, every one who passes by her shall hiss and wag his hand (vers. 12–15).

And shall Jerusalem escape? No! Woe to the rebellious, polluted city, her fierce princes, her ravening judges, her treacherous prophets, her hypocritic priests (iii. 1–4). For God is just, and His judgments on the heathen were meant as warnings to her, but she paid no heed to them (vers. 5–7).

III. THE PROMISE (iii. 8–20).

But there is a remnant of the faithful, and what must they do? They must wait with patience till the terrible judgment of the wicked nations is overpast. After that, they all shall call upon Jehovah in a pure language, and suppliants shall be brought to Him as a pure offering, even from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia[1] (vers. 8–10). Then the day of shame and of arrogance on God's holy mountain shall be over, and the remnant of the meek and humble nation shall be just and truthful, and shall lie down, none making them afraid (vers. 11–13).

Rejoice, then, O Zion! thy punishment is ended, thine enemy cast out, thy King is in the midst of thee, even Jehovah, and He will love thee (vers. 14–17). Now she may be a reproach, but then shall Jehovah gather and settle her children, and make them a name and a praise among all nations of the earth (vers. 18–20).[2]

Thus, with a general picture of the Messianic days, but with no special mention of the Messianic King, the prophet ends. His view is comprehensive, and he attaches deep importance to external worship, but his style is not original, and the present arrangement of his prophecies is somewhat disjointed. His book can hardly be reckoned among the highest expressions of the spirit of Hebrew prophecy, still less can it be called (with Bucer) "a compendium of all prophecy." His de-

[1] Literally, "I will turn to the nations a pure lip, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord with one shoulder, and from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia shall they bring My suppliants, even the daughter of My dispersed, as an offering unto Me."

[2] Some critics see in this psalm a later addition.

nunciations are singularly bitter, as, for instance, when he speaks of Jerusalem as a rebellious, polluted, and oppressing city (iii. 1); and singularly sweeping, as when he says that "all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy, saith the Lord" (iii. 8). He includes the Philistines (ii. 4), Moab, Ammon (ii. 8), Ethiopia (ii. 12), and even Assyria and Nineveh (ii. 13), as well as Judah and Jerusalem, in the wide sweep of that threatened wrath; and, although they are promised an ultimate deliverance, it is only after terrible vengeance (ii. 11–iii. 8). The prophets, like all other men, felt the influence of the period in which they lived, and Zephaniah's conviction of urgent peril may have been deepened by rumours of the Scythians, who, as is evident from allusions in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, made a deep impression on the imagination of the Jews. The resistless power of these northern barbarians seemed to threaten universal ruin; but the Messianic days which are to follow shall include the Gentiles as well as the Chosen People (iii. 9, 10, 14–20). And thus there is a loving purpose even in God's severest judgments.

CHAPTER XV.

HABAKKUK.

The name Habakkuk—Perhaps a Levite—His date—His eminence and originality—His book—The complaint—The oracle—Its deep significance—The Pæan—Legends.

THE peculiar name Habakkuk (LXX. Ἀμβακούμ) seems to mean "embraced" or "pressed to the heart," a name which might not unnaturally have been bestowed upon a dearly loved child. This seems to be the connotation of the word rather than that of "wrestler"—*luctator fortis et rigidus*—which is given to it by St. Jerome; or that of "one who presses to the heart" (*Herzer*), given to it by Luther. He says that it is a suitable name for one who, as it were, takes his people in his arms to console them, as one takes a wailing child to nurse in the hopes that it may grow better, if God will.[1]

Of the Prophet Habakkuk we know no personal details. From the musical directions attached to the third chapter (iii. 1–19) and the expression, "my stringed instruments," it has been conjectured that he was a Levite. Keil, Pusey, and others, influenced by instances in which his phrases may have been imitated by Zephaniah and Jeremiah,[2] think that he lived in the reign of Josiah, about B.C. 626. Hitzig, Maurer, Ewald, Knobel, Reuss, V. Orelli, and most critics, with far more probability, infer that he lived in the reign of Jehoiakim (about B.C. 609–598), and nearer to the actual commencement of the Babylonish captivity (B.C. 586). This gives the most natural meaning to the phrase "in your days" (i. 5). Delitzsch, in his "Messianic Prophecy"

[1] Canon Cook says that the reduplicated form of the name denotes reiteration or earnestness.

[2] Hab. ii. 20: "The Lord is in His Holy Temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him"; Zeph. i. 7; Hab. i. 8; Jer. iv. 13, v. 6; Zeph. iii. 3. The resemblances are undoubted, but it is hardly possible to decide from internal evidence which prophet borrowed from the other. The similarity of expression may be accidental.

(1880 ; p. 77), referring to the recorded threatenings of various unnamed prophets in the reign of Manasseh (2 Kings xxi. 10), thinks that he may have even lived in those days ; but that is evidently too far back ; nor is it possible that he should have had no reproof for the idolatry and the abominations which these nameless prophets denounced.

Whatever may be the date of Habakkuk the question does not affect his prophetic originality and eminence. Though, as regards style and intensity of immediate influence, he stands below the great earlier prophets, he has a special grandeur of his own. He contains little or nothing which is directly Messianic,[1] but is inferior to none of his mighty predecessors in spiritual insight.[2] His prophecy is the more deeply interesting because he abandons the beaten path trodden by most of those who had gone before him. He is confronted by new conditions, and strikes out a new line of thought which has an eternal significance. "We are still able to admire in him," says Ewald, "the genuine type and full beauty of ancient Hebrew prophecy; he is its last pure light, and although he already reproduces much from older books, he still maintains complete independence." He was not, like Amos, or Micah, or Isaiah, a great tribune of the people. He did not attempt, perhaps he was not able, to be one of those—

> "whose resistless eloquence
> Wielded at will that fierce democracy";

but he used his consummate skill in poetry and literature to bring consolation to his people. Hence we find in him a rich originality alike in form, thought, and illustration. He is far more a moral seer, and a deep theologian, than a herald of the

[1] In iii. 13 the expression, "Thine Anointed," is, in one reading of the LXX., rendered *τοὺς χριστούς σου*, and is referred by Ewald to the anointed nation. V. Orelli refers it to the Anointed King of Isaiah, Micah, and other prophets.

[2] His appearance in apocryphal legend (Bel and the Dragon, 33-39, where he is transported to Babylon by the hair of the head to take pottage to Daniel in the lions' den) shows the impression he had made on the mind of his people, and perhaps indicates his date as a contemporary of Daniel. The Rabbis say that Habakkuk was a pupil of Nahum. Probably his book is placed after that of Nahum because after the deliverance from the Ninevites he prophesies the tyranny of the Chaldeans. It is worse than useless to repeat the Rabbinical invention that he was the son of the Shunamite, &c.

future. The predictive element in him is reduced almost to nothing, for the Chaldean invasion which he prophesied was already on the horizon; the spiritual is almost exclusively predominant. His book is "a scenic and declamatory piece (a drama), divided into three parts, which the prophet constructs around that new fundamental thought, by which light is to be thrown upon the darkness, and peace into the contending thoughts of the time." That he is twice announced as "Habakkuk the prophet" (i. 1; iii. 1) shows that his position was well known and assured.

In the earlier prophets we usually find the three topics of menace, exhortation, and a promise of final prosperity to the remnant, followed by yet wider Messianic hopes for the nations of the world. Habakkuk has to deal with a new and eminently painful problem by which he is precluded from holding out any near or striking hopes. He writes at the sudden dawn of the Chaldean power in all its terrible splendour, and a full century was destined to elapse before that power, in its turn, met with its just doom. He could not console his countrymen in the prospect of actual and impending calamities by any assurance that those calamities would be short-lived, or that the wrath of God would fall in swift vengeance upon the oppressors.

This was one respect in which he was differently situated from such a prophet as Isaiah; and there was another which was yet more trying. His predecessors had always been able to point to the crimes and idolatry of Israel and Judah as a sufficient explanation of the catastrophes with which they were threatened or already overwhelmed. Habakkuk almost alone has no such complaint to make, no such warning to administer. There is no prevalent idolatry, or wrong, or luxury, or greed with which he can brand his countrymen. Any wrongs which do exist (i. 2–4) seem to spring from without, not from within; they are due to the perversions and the violence of foreign persecutors.[1] It is obvious, therefore, that he writes after the great reformation in the days of Josiah. That reformation put

[1] Considering the tone of the entire prophecy it seems much more probable that the iniquity—spoiling, violence, strife, perverted judgment—over which Habakkuk mourns in these verses as a terrible spectacle, was due to *external* interference than to native misdoing, otherwise there would surely be some exhortation to repentance. Those who take a different view suppose that the announcement of the Chaldean terror is intended as a judgment on these transgressions.

idolatry under the ban, and in other respects it produced a genuine amendment of the national morality. It is true that no long period elapsed before it had spent its force, and the subsequent complaints of Jeremiah and later prophets showed that they found it to be in many respects superficial. When they looked back upon it from the days of the subsequent kings and from the early part of the Captivity they could not but regard it with profound disappointment. In this it did not differ from other movements of reform which leave the human heart essentially unchanged though they may create a revolution in outward manners. But perhaps Habakkuk wrote before the earlier hopes of good men had been blighted ; and perhaps, as a Levite, he saw most of the external improvement and less of the hypocrisy which showed that this new covenant of the people with God in the days of Josiah was but a *κάλλος κακῶν ὕπουλον*, which did but "skin and film the ulcerous place."[1]

And, therefore, the moral difficulty which he has to face was that of Job and that of the Psalmist, but under serious and startling aggravations. At previous times the paradox of suffering innocence had only, or predominantly, presented itself to the Hebrew mind in *individual* instances. They had to content themselves with the twofold consolation that it was an exceptional condition ; that the entire working of God's Providence tended in the opposite direction ; that, whatever might seem to be the abnormal aberrations from the general law, guilt as a rule produced temporal misfortune, and righteousness as a rule was accompanied by earthly prosperity. When the exceptions to this rule forced themselves upon their attention they at first took refuge in the consolation that the good fortune of the wicked was short-lived, and that, even in this life, they were, sooner or later, smitten by the thunderbolt.[2] This was the Psalmist's solution of the riddle of the righteous in misery and the ungodly flourishing like a green bay-tree. In the case of Job the sacred moralist shook himself free from the

[1] The necessary uncertainty about the date of Habakkuk is unfortunate, since we should have been able to enter more fully into his prophecy if we had been better acquainted with the immediate circumstances which called it forth. Some have argued that he must have written some time before the Chaldean invasion, otherwise he would not have spoken of the appearance of that nation as so stupendous a marvel. But the wonder expressed by Habakkuk is founded on moral and spiritual considerations, and might have been expressed just as well after the actual event. [2] See Psa. lxxiii.

traditional orthodoxy which required men to assume that if a man was afflicted he had necessarily been guilty. It was, perhaps, a later hand which added to the sublime drama the chapters which seemed necessary to those who could not regard the theodicæa as complete without saving Job from death upon his dunghill, and crowning him with sevenfold happiness.

Ecclesiastes takes refuge in general considerations, in the resignation of human helplessness, in the conviction that, come what will, righteousness is happier than misdoing, and in a thankful enjoyment of such innocent temporal pleasures as are within man's reach. It was not till later times that the problem was relegated to a life beyond the grave.

But Habakkuk had to deal with a yet more appalling difficulty. The misery of the individual might seem to be the result of the infinite complication of human life. It might be conceived as necessary, or at least as inevitable, amid the vast sum total of intermingled destinies. But when the sufferer was a righteous nation, nay, not only a righteous nation, but the chosen people of God—the seed of Abraham, God's servant, the children of Jacob whom He had chosen, the only nation that did not worship carved images and vain gods, the only nation that had received, and in part, at least, obeyed, a law more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb—when the bright Messianic hopes of earlier prophets seem to have set into seas of blood—when the heirs of the Divine Promise seemed to be singled out for pre-eminence in misery and humiliation—it was natural that a terrible perplexity should overcloud the souls of men with whom a belief in the special protection of Jehovah had been the main element of their religious convictions.

But even this was not all. It was startling enough to see the descendants of the patriarchs carried away into captivity by a fierce, brutal, and blood-stained nation like the Assyrians; but it was remembered that the Ten Tribes had constantly apostatized into Baal-worship, and had systematically violated the fiery law of Sinai by making to themselves graven images and turning their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth hay. And if the lion claws of Nineveh had also rent the cities of Judah, the prophets of the past had taught again and again that these calamities were the consequence of unfaithfulness, and that if there were sincere repentance and earnest turning to

God the overflowing scourge should be removed. But what was the spectacle now presented to the contemplation of Jehovah's thoughtful worshippers? There had been thorough reform. There had been an apparently sincere repentance. There was not a visible idol in all the bounds of Judah. Even the High Places had been removed, though so many righteous and godly kings had at least tolerated their continuance. The whole people, headed by their king, their princes, and their priests, had turned to God with fasting, with weeping, and with vows of obedience. Was it not reasonable to expect, had not all the voices of past prophecy taught them to look for, an immense return of prosperity? Ought not the sun to have burst forth long ago from behind those threatening clouds? Alas! the reality was very different! Judah had never been more religious, and yet Judah was never more utterly undone. It was marvellous, but it was going on before their eyes. It was unbelievable, but it was true. The Chaldean power was upon them, bitter and vehement and terrible, swifter than a leopard in its bounding ferocity, ravenous as a pack of evening wolves, sweeping as the wind, and yet ignorant of any god but his own might. And the prophet was unable to hold out any prospect of deliverance. No doubt the nations were all raising their voices against this new and dreadful power in a chorus of execration, and prognosticating the day of inevitable vengeance.[1] But as yet there is not a single indication of the quarter from which that vengeance is to come; and though the retribution is so certain that he who ran might read it, the time for it was not yet, and while it tarried there was no remedy, save in endurance and in hope.

And in that era of endurance and hope deferred the lives of men, or even of generations, might pass away. Was there

[1] Babylon was in reality a more ancient power than Nineveh, but had been eclipsed and for some time in vassalage to Assyria. But in 625, when the last king of Assyria, Assur-idil-ili (Saracus), was threatened by Cyaxares and the Medes, he entrusted an army to Nabopolassar, who revolted to the enemy and made himself king of Babylon. In 606 he associated with him his son Nebuchadrezzar, who in that year defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, and reduced Jehoiakim to vassalage. Three years afterwards Jehoiakim revolted, was defeated, and killed (Jer. xxii. 19; xxxvi. 30). After three months his son Jehoiachin was deposed, the Temple plundered, and many captives carried to Babylon, B.C. 600. In B.C. 588 the Temple and city were totally destroyed.

nothing terrible in the thought that through all their own brief days the vials of anguish might continue to be poured out? that the entire period of their own lives might be desolated, and for all this God's anger not be turned away, but His wrath be poured out still? Would the prospect of better things in the far-off times atone sufficiently for lives which, so far as this earth was concerned, seemed to have no pleasure in them?

As he brooded on these desolating thoughts—as he looked out on a day of the Lord which was a day of clouds and thick darkness—the light of truth dawned on the soul of the troubled Levite; and for himself, for his nation, for all time it was granted him to see at least in germ, and to set forth at least in outline, the two great truths upon which, as on the great main pillars of a temple, the consolations of life must rest.

1. One of these convictions is that God is the Lord, and not another; that He sitteth above the water-floods, be the earth never so unquiet. Men may worship their own prowess, they may "sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense to their drag, because by them their portion is fat and their meat dainty"; and yet God is from everlasting and cannot die; and since He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, He has but ordained them for judgment and established them for correction.[1]

2. The other supporting conviction suggested by the prophet is newer and more original than this. The trust in God, even though He slay, had been found in Job and in the Psalmists, and was inherent in the very essence of true religion. Not so the dawning sense that earthly prosperity has nothing to do with the deepest realities of life; that it is no proof of God's favour any more than earthly affliction is a proof of God's displeasure; that blessedness was attainable even if the very capacity for happiness might seem to be quenched; in a word, that righteousness is life. All this is involved in that great utterance, "*The righteous shall live by his faithfulness.*"[2] In that truth lay the germ of the Christian paradox which, six and a half centuries later, began to astonish the world—the Christian paradox of gladness in the midst of sorrow; of much affliction pervaded, illuminated, rendered heavenly by simultaneous joy in the Holy Ghost.

Far deeper were the meanings which in the early years of the Christian dispensation were read into the words of the

[1] Hab. i. 12, 13; ii. 5, 6, 20. [2] ii. 4.

Hebrew prophet by the Christian apostle. Yet all the profound theological significance which lay in St. Paul's thesis that "the just shall live by faith"[1] was practically involved in the pregnant sentence, enunciated amid the miseries of Chaldean oppression, "the righteous man shall live by his fidelity." In point of fact, the moral steadfastness which the prophet had in view was alike manifested by, and rooted in, a deep trust in God and loyal allegiance to Him. And this principle of "justification by faith" here enunciated by a seer of whom we know hardly anything beyond his name and the three short chapters of his poetry and prophecy, is one of the great links between all that is most spiritual and permanent in the Old and the New Dispensations. Levite though he probably was, Habakkuk placed as little reliance upon Temple ceremonies and formal sacrifices as Micah or Isaiah. He saw that the essential service of the Lord lies in meekness, mercy, and justice—that obedience is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams; that faith in God and fidelity towards God are the alpha and omega of true religion.

And even the Talmudists had not overlooked the palmary importance of this saying. For though by exorbitant inferences they had multiplied the Mosaic law into six hundred and thirteen precepts, yet they themselves point out in more than one passage[2] that David in the 15th Psalm had reduced those precepts to eleven; and Isaiah to six (Isa. xxxiii. 15); and Micah to three (Micah vi. 8); and Amos[3] to one; and that this one necessary precept had been still more clearly set forth by Habakkuk in the verse, "The just shall live by faith." It is no small glory to this prophet that he should have been commissioned to enunciate a message which sums up with such emphatic brevity, yet with such far-reaching fulness, alike the commands and the promises of the Old and New Testaments.

The structure of this remarkable little book in which these two truths are brought home to the minds of the prophet's countrymen is as follows. The division, as was so common among the prophets, is threefold. In the first chapter Habakkuk pours forth to God his agitated appeal as he

[1] Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11. Comp. Heb. x. 38, where the best reading (ℵ. A, &c.) seems to be "My just man shall live by faith."

[2] Makkoth, f. 24. a. [3] Amos v. 4, "Seek ye Me, and ye shall live."

gazes on the fierceness of the Chaldean tyranny, and asks how long the Holy and Eternal One can suffer the prevalence of their iniquity (i. 1–17). In the second, as he waits for the answer, he is shown that while he must still possess his soul in patience and find life in faithfulness (ii. 1–4), yet the doom of wickedness is certain, however long it may be delayed, and the Chaldean shall perish amid the shoutings of the people whom he has oppressed (ii. 5–20).[1] Then in the third chapter he breaks into a splendid dithyramb in which, in answer to his cry, the Lord manifests Himself in the same glorious apocalypse as when He had flashed forth for the deliverance of His people in the wilderness. Satisfied by that memory of Jehovah's power as a Deliverer, the prophet ends with a touching and humble, yet unshaken, expression of his absolute dependence upon God, in whom he would rejoice in hope though every condition of life around him seemed only to breathe despair.

Habakkuk, then, is the prophet of faith. Oppressed by the sight of a nation suffering in spite of its righteousness, and suffering at the hands of cruel, sensual, idolatrous insolence, he still holds fast to the conviction that faith will be delivered and will in the end be jubilant.

The first division of Habakkuk's prophecy may be called—

I. THE AGONIZING CRY (i. 1–17).

1. After the brief heading, the prophet appeals to Jehovah. On every side he sees violence and wrong, justice cold and benumbed because the wicked oppressors — perhaps under foreign influence—surround the just with their strife and sin. How long will Jehovah be deaf to his cry, and withhold His help? (i. 2-4).

2. *The terrible announcement.*—Is there no cause for amazement, and even for incredulity, if incredulity were possible?

For Jehovah speaks and says that He is raising up a nation, rough, restless, aggressive, terrible, independent. His horses are swifter than leopards, his chargers leap like evening wolves, his horsemen fly like vultures to the spoil.[2] They collect captives like the dust; they mock at kings; they laugh at strong-

[1] In point of fact the Babylonian Empire did not flourish longer than eighty-nine years.

[2] Deut. xxviii. 49; Jer. xlviii. 40, xlix. 22; Lam. iv. 19; Ezek. xvii. 3; Dan. vii. 4.

holds. Their characteristics are sweeping rapidity and daring self-reliance which lead them into reckless guilt.[1] And in this fact the prophet already sees the germ of the future ruin of the Chaldean; for he makes a god of his own strength (5–11).

3. *The troubled inquiry.*—But the only true God is the Eternal Jehovah who cannot die. Therefore the Chaldean is predestined to be judged and punished. And yet how is it that though God is of too pure eyes to look at evil, this foreign invader, this insolent idolater is suffered to treat men like fish or helpless worms, and to be so irresistible with his net and dredge that he sacrifices and burns incense to *them* as to his gods?[2] Is he still to catch and slay the nations without scruple and without respite? (12–17).

II. GOD'S ANSWER.

The prophet will ascend his watch-tower and listen to what God will answer to his impeachment.

And the answer came, and he was bidden to write it on tablets for all to read. It was no promise of immediate deliverance; it will come, but he must wait for it. It is—

> "*Behold his soul* (the soul of the Chaldean) *is puffed up, it is not upright in him,*
> *But the righteous shall live by his faithfulness.*"[3]

Short, and at the first sight irrelevant, as the oracle may seem, it contains all that is necessary for the justification of God and the consolation of man.[4] It is enough to know that the Chaldean is inflated with pride, though he is living by robbery

[1] The description shows that the Babylonian cavalry resembled Cossacks or Uhlans, sweeping over the country in all directions for plunder (Canon Cook); comp. Isa. xiv. 6, 16, 17.

[2] Just as the Scythians and Huns worshipped a naked sword.

[3] Comp. Isa. xxvi. 2–4; Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11. LXX. ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως μου ζήσεται. St. Paul omits the μου. In Heb. x. 38 the incorrect reading of the LXX. (ἐὰν ὑποστείληται) is followed, from which, however, the same general sense may be deduced, though the words are freely dealt with.

[4] Canon Cook says excellently, "In one short saying the two general aspects of the prophet's enquiry are dealt with; the pride and injustice of the invader are dealt with, and the just man is assured of life, *i.e.*, preservation from evil and salvation, on the condition that he hold steadfastly to the principle of faith."

and wrong. In that pride and injustice lie the germs of his future destruction, though the destruction may be long delayed. And the righteousness of the righteous does not only contain the *promise* of life—it *is* life. God's justice, therefore, needs no further vindication. The just man—the ideal nation—is not under any crushing disadvantage. His justice is his crown of life and of rejoicing. It is not he who needs to be pitied, but his oppressor.

Yes! for the pride of the Chaldean is an inflation like that of drunkenness. His greed is insatiable as death, and all the nations gathered under his crushing sway shall rise and taunt him (vers. 1–6*a*).

Their taunts are given in five strophes which heap up the several accusations against the Chaldeans—for their rapacity, their selfish greed, their ambitious buildings, their insulting corruption of the nations, and their senseless idolatry. Each strophe comprises three verses.

1. *Rapacity of the Chaldeans.* Ho! he that heapeth up what is not his! How long? Shall not the nations which he has stripped bite[1] and shake and strip him in turn? (vers. 6*b*–8).[2]

2. *Their selfishness.* Ho! the grasping tyrant who only thinks selfishly of his own house, and cares not what ruin he inflicts. His self-aggrandisement shall be self-destruction, and the stone from the wall and the beam from the timber-work shall cry out against him (vers. 9–11).

3. *Their vain ambition.* Ho! he that buildeth the city with blood and stablishes the state by wrong. Jehovah alone is the strength of states, and godless nations do but weary themselves for vanity which is doomed to fire. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (vers. 12–14).

4. *Their cruel drunkenness.* Ho! he that rejoices in his

[1] The word for "bite" perhaps has an intended assonance with the word for "interest."

[2] In ii. 6 "Woe to him . . . that ladeth himself with *thick clay*," there is one of the paronomasias, or plays on words, so common in Hebrew prophetic literature. The word means "a heavy pledge" extorted by the Chaldeans from conquered nations; but when divided into two words (עב and טיט) it means "thick clay" (Syr., "a cloud of mud"). One of Nebuchadnezzar's boasts was, "I have amassed silver, gold, metals, gems of all kinds and values, a collection of objects of great price, immense treasures." There can hardly be an allusion to the clay walls of Babylon.

stupefaction of the nations and in putting them to shame. The cup of stupefaction, the infamy of exposure shall be forced also upon him by Jehovah. For Lebanon and its wild beasts plead for revenge against their devastator, because of men's blood and all the violence which the Chaldeans had inflicted (vers. 15–17).

5. *Their idolatry.* Ho! he that worships graven and molten images. Dumb and motionless, how can they avail even though they be overlaid with gold and silver? (vers. 18, 19).

Such is the fivefold cry of various oppressed nationalities as they take up their proverbs and serious taunts against the Babylonian power. But filled with yet deeper thoughts the prophet exclaims, "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him!" (ver. 20).

III. The third chapter of Habakkuk is at once a pæan and a prayer. In form, it is a dramatic and dithyrambic poem, which illustrates the struggle of mind by which hope had been wrung out of calamity and fear. So far there had been no promise of immediate deliverance; nay, the silence of the prophet on this head implied the inevitable continuance of the present calamities. He had pointed to faith and faithfulness as the only remedy. This was the answer which he had received from God, the only inference as to present duty which could be deduced from the certainty of the Divine supremacy. Hope for himself, hope for his nation lay in moral steadfastness. But that steadfastness might well be encouraged by the remembrance of God's marvellous deliverances of His people in days of old. And these are the thoughts which are to be poured forth in the hymns and prayers of the congregation assembled for worship. Whether the circumstances of Habakkuk's own day permitted the musical rendering of his magnificent hymn in the Temple or not, it was clearly well suited for public use, and if it was not set to music by himself it was so by a later hand as soon as the reviving fortunes of the Jews permitted.

First the prophet pours forth the supplication of his troubled heart (ver. 2). Then the mighty song of the congregation bursts forth in five strophes (3–15), "proceeding as always from the memory of the ancient deeds in the deliverance of the nations at the beginning and foundation of the community, but this time rising and expatiating upon it with peculiar warmth of recollec

tion and thanksgiving. We have pure and simple joy, an imperishable joy in the true God and eternal Lord of the community, such as cannot be overcome by anything in the present, like a wholly foreign note of perennial and swelling joy, sounding into that time of deepest despair. Yet this is the necessary foundation-note of the feeling of the community when in the presence of God—the note that necessarily rises at every period of most painful distress from the imperishable memory of the ancient deliverance wrought by Jehovah at the Red Sea." The Egyptian in old days thought that he had annihilated Israel, as the Chaldean now thought. Yet God who had overthrown the one would overthrow the other. The same thought dominated in the Song of Deborah and in the Sixty-seventh Psalm. When this mighty outburst of music is over, the prophet is still unable at first to shake off his overwhelming fear and horror (16, 17) at the thought of the trouble and anguish which now is, and is yet to come. The present blight and famine seem to be but omens of yet more overwhelming calamities. Nevertheless hope triumphs in the triumph of faith, and remains in final possession, as, in language which echoes that of the Eighteenth Psalm, the prophet expresses his trust and joy in the God of his salvation.

This third chapter—one of the most magnificent pieces of poetry in the Bible—is called, "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth." The expression, "upon Shigionoth," means "in dithyrambics."[1] In the title of Psa. vii. we find "*Shiggaion* of David, which he sang unto the Lord concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite." *Upon Shigionoth* might be rendered "to the music of Psalms of ecstasy." *Shiggaion* "denotes," says Ewald, "a wandering, devious, crooked course, when thought, feeling, and time rapidly change with the new strophe; and as a point of fact this more passionately excited, rapidly changing, and, as it were, wandering style of music accords well with the sense in the two cases where a lyric is thus denominated."[2] He compares it to a Pindaric ode.

The divisions of the chapter are as follows:

[1] "Nach Dithyrambenweise," V. Orelli.

[2] Psa. vii.; Hab. iii. There is a predominance of the triple structure of clauses, probably due to metrical laws. Plutarch describes dithyrambs as being "full of passion and change, with motions and agitations to and fro."

1. The prophet has heard the oracle of Jehovah, and being still full of fear he appeals to His mercy.

2. The prayer is scarcely uttered before the congregation's hymn of praise swells forth.[1] It describes the glorious manifestation of Jehovah in ancient days to save His people Israel as He came from Teman and Mount Paran, the southern and eastern districts of Edom, in the Sinaitic wilderness,[2] with the rays of light streaming from His hands,[3] the very light being but the veil of His glory.[4] Before Him went the pestilence and the fever-glow (3–5).

i. The earth shook, the nations were tossed aside, the everlasting mountains fell to dust before His presence. Ethiopia was terrified,[5] and the tents of Midian trembled before Him (4–7).

ii. Was His wrath against the rivers and the sea, that He made His bow bare and rode upon His chariots of salvation?[6] (8, 9).

iii. Mountains and deeps, sun and moon were terrified before His arrows, and the light of His glittering spear, when He marched through the earth threshing the nations in His anger.

> "Thou wentest forth to save thy people, to save Thine Anointed,
> Thou shattered'st the head from the house of the wicked,
> Making bare the foundation upon the neck.

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[1] "Revive thy work in the midst of the years"; LXX., *ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζώων γνωσθήσῃ* (which was applied to the ox and ass in the manger).

[2] Comp. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Judg. v. 4. The "Selah" which occurs here and ver. 9, is only found in the Book of Psalms. It is a musical pause—perhaps for the voices to rest, and the instruments to strike up.

[3] "Horns." Comp. Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30. "Thus the first rays of the sun are compared by Arabic poets to the horns of the gazelle" (Cook).

[4] "The hiding of His power." Comp. Psa. xviii. 11; "He made darkness His secret place."

> "*Dark* with excess of light His skirts appear" (Milton).

[5] "Cushan," perhaps a tribe of Cush. There is no reason to connect it with Chushan-rishathaim, Judg. iii. 8.

[6] In ver. 9 the words rendered "according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word," represent a text so uncertain that it is difficult to choose the true meaning among "more than a hundred explanations." Ewald renders it "Sevenfold spear-charges of victory." V. Orelli, "Beschworenes, Waffen des Wortes!" Cook, "Chastisements seven according to promise" (comp. Deut. xxxii. 40–42). Mr. Cox, taking the words as a military command, renders "'Sevens of spears,' was the word."

Thou did'st strike through with his own spear the head of his warriors
Who swept down to scatter me,
Whose rejoicing was, as in ambush, to devour the helpless.
Thou drovest through the sea Thy horses,
Through the roar of many waters." [1]

3. The prophet has heard the pæan and speaks once more. He has heard the oracle of Jehovah (ver. 2), and has heard the dithyrambs of glorious memories; but since the fact still remains that the Chaldean is at hand, and there is no present help, he is filled with anguish and trembling at the thought that he must but sit still and await the day of distress until the afflicter of his nation comes up against her [2] (16). There is no prospect but that of drought and devastation (17). Yet he triumphantly concludes:

"In Jehovah will I rejoice,
I will be glad in the God of my salvation;
Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength;
He maketh my feet like hind's feet,
And maketh me walk upon the heights."

So ends the prayer and poem, and to it is appended the musical direction, "To the chief singer on my stringed instruments."

We would gladly have known more of a writer to whom belongs the high distinction of having composed so memorable a poem, while he has also enshrined as the centre of his prophecy an "oracle" so full of depth and insight that St. Paul seized upon it as the briefest expression of his theological system. It is strange that under such circumstances tradition should not have preserved for us a single fact of his biography. Legend was not content with this silence. It asserted that the prophet was of the tribe of Simeon; that he was born at Beth-Zocher; that at the Chaldean conquest he was carried away to the little state of Ostrakine; that he was afterwards set free, and devoting himself to agriculture, lived on till the return from the Exile. His grave was shown at Keilah in the tribe of Judah, and also at Chukkok, in Naphtali. We have already mentioned

[1] From Ewald, with variations.

[2] The text is uncertain, but here, as in so many passages, the renderings of the Authorised Version are practically unintelligible. The headings of the chapters in many instances show how little the translators of that day understood great parts of the prophets on which so much light has been thrown by modern criticism.

the legend about him which is found in "Bel and the Dragon." In one of the manuscripts of the Septuagint (Codex Chisianus), the heading to this book is "From the prophecy of Habakkuk, the son of Joshua, of the tribe of Levi"; and that he was a Levite is as we have seen a probable conjecture.[1]

[1] He has many resemblances to Psa. xviii. and other Psalms of David, and to the Temple Psalms of Asaph (lxxiii.-lxxxiii.).

CHAPTER XVI.

OBADIAH.

Obadiah—What is known of him—His date—His allusions—Relations between Israel and Edom—Analysis and general bearing of the prophecy—The fulfilments.

THE personality of Obadiah, as of so many of the Minor Prophets, lies deep in shadow. The name, which is not uncommon,[1] means "a servant or worshipper of Jehovah," and therefore resembles such names as Abdi, Abdiel, Abdallah. The best-known bearer of the name in the Old Testament is the minister of Ahab, who protected the prophets of the Lord from the persecution of Jezebel (1 Kings xviii.), by hiding a hundred of them by fifties in a cave. The tomb of an Obadiah used to be shown in Samaria with those of Elisha and John the Baptist; and St. Jerome, in his interesting description of his travels with Paula in Palestine, gives an account of the miracles wrought at the tomb, and the strange assembly of demoniacs and fanatics who surrounded it. There is nothing to prove the identity of the prophet with any other bearer of the name, though, on the supposition that he prophesied in the days of King Jehoram, Delitzsch thinks that he may have been the Obadiah mentioned in 2 Chron. xvii. 7 as one of the Levites whom Jehoshaphat sent to teach the law in the cities of Judah. Of his personal history not a single incident or even tradition has been preserved. All that we can hope to determine respecting him is the date of his brief prophecy; but here, too, we find ourselves baffled by the indistinctness of the allusions.

These are partly negative and partly positive; but though they cannot, amid the varying opinions of critics, be regarded as decisive, they at least lead with a high degree of proba-

[1] 1 Chron. iii. 21, vii. 3, viii. 38, ix. 9; 2 Chron. xvii. 7, xxxiv. 12; Ezra viii. 9; Neh. x. 5.

bility to the conclusion that Obadiah wrote shortly after the final invasion of Nebuchadrezzar.[1] Negatively we notice that there is no reference either to the Assyrians or the Babylonians. This may perhaps be explained by the fact that he is exclusively dealing with the crime and punishment of Edom. On the other hand, it is probable that he wrote after the obliteration of the Northern Kingdom, for it has wholly disappeared from his view. He thinks only of the restoration of Jerusalem. He does indeed mention the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph, and says that "they shall possess their possessions" (17, 18), yet, in the following verse, he says that "they of Negeb and the Shephelah (*i.e.*, the southern division and the maritime plain) of *Judah* should occupy not only the Mount of Esau, but also the fields of Ephraim and of Samaria: and then, as though there were only one other tribe to be provided for, he assigns to Benjamin the Transjordanic possessions of the two and a half tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh." It may therefore be regarded as certain that Obadiah wrote after the deportation of the northern tribes by the Assyrians. And this becomes still more probable if in verse 17 we read with the LXX., Vulgate, and Targum, "the house of Jacob shall inherit *their disinheritors*," which only involves a very slight change of points, and saves the prophecy from self-contradiction.[2]

And this inference is strengthened by verse 20. In this verse he says that "*the captivity of this host of the children of Israel* which the Canaanites (have carried captive) even unto Zarephath, and the captivity of Jerusalem which is *in Sepharad* shall possess the cities of the south." The rendering of the verse is indeed uncertain, and in the form just quoted it differs both from the text and the margin of the Authorised Version. Yet it is clear that the prophet is speaking of a body of captives. They are not in Babylonia, and this is a point which we find it difficult to explain. They are among the Canaanites in Phœnicia ("*even unto Sarepta*"), and in Sepharad; and Obadiah seems to identify himself with the former body when he speaks of "the captivity of *this* host."

[1] Nebuchadrezzar is the proper form of the name—Nabu-kuduri-utsur, *Nebo is the protector against misfortune*, or *Nebo defend the crown*—as in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But the form used by later Jewish writers prevailed.

[2] See Rowland Williams, "Hebrew Prophets," i. 87.

The only explanation offered is that Obadiah "may have been one of the many inhabitants of Judah who had to flee before the Babylonish inroad, and were afterwards spread as homeless exiles through the cities of Palestine and Phœnicia."[1]

This is only a conjecture, and the word rendered host (חֵל) here, and in verse 11, is so unusual that Ewald supposed it to be of Assyrian origin. It may possibly mean "bulwark" or "sea-coast."

Equally uncertain is the allusion to "Sepharad." It is the origin of the expression "Sephardim," which distinguishes the Spanish Jews from the Ashkenazim or German Jews. The modern Jews take it to mean "Spain," and interpret Zarephath to mean France. But the discovery of the name Çparda for Sardis (between Cappadocia and Ionia) in the Behistun Inscription seems to make it probable that Sepharad is Sardis. The prophetic promise is that as the restored exiles of Judah and Benjamin shall occupy Idumea, Philistia, and the lands of the northern tribes, and the territory east of Jordan, so the other scattered exiles in Phœnicia and in Lydia and other countries shall come back and occupy the vacant regions of the Negeb. Sardis is specially mentioned as the capital of the country, which was a great slave market in the ancient world, and contained multitudes of the Jews of the Dispersion. It seems probable, therefore, that Obadiah wrote shortly after the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar, about B.C. 587.

It has been objected that if this had been the case his prophecy would have been placed in the canon not after Amos, but rather between the præ-Chaldean prophets and those who belong to the period after the Exile. But there is no weight in this consideration. The date of Obadiah was not known with precision, and he was placed next to Amos because his prophecy of the doom of Edom is an amplification of the doom pronounced upon that nation by the earlier prophet (Amos ix. 12).

The immediate origin of the prophecy is the brutality of Edom in rejoicing over the capture and ruin of Jerusalem (10–14). In the Book of Deuteronomy the Jews had been commanded, "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother"; and although the relations between the two kindred

[1] "Speaker's Commentary."

peoples had often been far from satisfactory, yet better things might have been expected from the Edomites than that they should not only exult savagely over the destruction of Judah, but even cut off the bands of miserable fugitives and hound on the ruthless ravagers.

The capture of Jerusalem here alluded to can hardly be any other than its capture by Nebuchadrezzar. No such circumstances as those alluded to by Obadiah occurred either in the occupation of Jerusalem by Shishak in the reign of Rehoboam; or in the sack of the city by Philistines and Arabians in the reign of Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17); or after the defeat of Amaziah by Joash, king of Israel (2 Chron. xxv. 23). But the capture of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon was a far more terrible disaster than these, and although we are not historically told that the Edomites had seized this opportunity of glutting their vengeance, we know that they did so from the bitter complaints, not only of Obadiah, but of other prophets. Thus in the Lamentations of Jeremiah the prophet ironically bids the daughter of Edom to rejoice and be glad over the fall of Judah, but immediately adds, as Obadiah does, a threat of vengeance upon her, and a promise of restoration to his countrymen (Lam. iv. 21, 22). Ezekiel addresses Edom and Judah in exactly similar terms (Exek. xxv. 12–14; xxxv. 1–15; xxxvi. 1–15). Again, in the 137th Psalm, the poet, perhaps a Levite who had returned from captivity after the decree of Cyrus, still recalls with indignation the exultant malice of the Edomites when, at every crashing fall of the hammers and axes which were demolishing the ramparts of Jerusalem and her sacred temple, they shouted to the heathen destroyers, "Down with it! down with it even to the ground!"[1]

The Jews forgot indeed the frightful provocation which Edom had received. If the Edomites had shown a churlish unfriendliness, dictated perhaps by selfish alarm, in refusing to allow the Israelites to pass through their territory in the days of the Exodus, that wrong had been punished when they had been conquered by David;[2] and though they won back their independence in the days of Jehoram (B.C. 889), they had been again crushed by Amaziah (B.C. 838).[3] It was but natural that

[1] See Lam. iv. 21, 22; Ezek. xxxv. 1-15; Isa. lxiii. 1–6; Psa. cxxxvii. 7; Esdras iv. 45–56.

[2] 2 Sam. viii. 14; comp. 1 Kings ix. 26. [3] 2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12.

they should make an effort to recover their lost territories as Judah began to be shorn of her powers.[1] But there was an element of ignoble ferocity in their malignant triumph over a foe utterly humiliated and struck down. No memory of old wrongs would excuse them for the baseness of trampling savagely upon the fallen. Yet this was what they had done, as we hear from Obadiah. "They stood in the passes to intercept the escape of those who would have fled down to the Jordan valley; they betrayed the fugitives; they indulged their barbarous revels on the Temple hill."[2] This was the misconduct which has awaked the long loud cry of execration raised by the Jewish nation against Edom. "It is the one imprecation which breaks forth from the Lamentations of Jeremiah; it is the culmination of the fierce threats of Ezekiel; it is the sole purpose of the short sharp cry of Obadiah; it is the bitterest drop in the sad recollections of the Israelite captives by the waters of Babylon; and the one warlike strain of the evangelical prophet is inspired by the hope that the Divine Conqueror would come knee-deep in Idumean blood." "Edom" in the Talmud is the cryptograph for Rome, and stands as the typical designation for all the deadliest foes of the House of Israel, and especially for the Christians.

But there is yet another circumstance which seems to show that Obadiah wrote shortly after the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, which had called forth the frantic joy and active co-operation of Edom. It is the circumstance that Jeremiah, with his mind full of the same wrath against the race of Esau, obviously borrows some of the language of his brother prophet. No one can read the "burden" of Edom in Obadiah 1–9, side by side with Jeremiah xlix. 7–22, without seeing that the two passages are not independent of each other. As is usual in the attempts to account for all similar phenomena, the opinions of critics differ. Some maintain that Jeremiah borrows from Obadiah, others that Obadiah borrows from Jeremiah,[3] and others again that both of them are utilizing for their own purposes a passage from some older prophecy.

Ewald adopts the third hypothesis, and deduces from it the precarious theory that the brief prophecy of Obadiah

[1] 2 Kings xvi. 6 (read "Edomites," not "Syrians"); 2 Chron. xxviii. 17
[2] Stanley, "Jewish Church," ii. 556. [3] Knobel, Bleek, Reuss.

is a composite structure. He supposes that the first seven verses were written by a prophet named Obadiah during the inroads of Rezin and Pekah, which harassed Judea, and enabled the Idumeans to maraud her southern possessions with impunity, and to establish themselves securely in their rocky fastnesses at Petra (Sela). It was in the reign of Jehoram that Jerusalem was captured by the Arabs and Philistines; and referring verse 11 to this siege, he thinks that this accounts for the silence about Assyria and Babylon, and also for the use of Obadiah by Joel. The remaining verses he regards as a compilation by a later writer, partly from this older prophet (who was also used by Jeremiah) and partly from other sources. No adequate proof is offered for these conjectures, and they are contradicted by the unity alike of thought and style throughout the prophecy, which forms a perfectly compacted whole.

It seems almost certain that Jeremiah adopts the words of Obadiah, and this is in accordance with his general practice, for in other chapters he certainly borrows the expressions of Isaiah and Amos.[1] In his prophecy against Moab may be traced the impress of Isa. xv., xvi. The general unity of the passage is more clearly marked in Obadiah. Caspari offers decisive reasons for thinking that the words of Obadiah have been smoothed down, modified, and made somewhat tamer by Jeremiah; but it cannot be shown that Obadiah did not quote from some older writer.[2]

If the view which we have taken of the date of Joel be correct, it is also probable that Joel, besides other resemblances, makes one direct reference to Obadiah. For Joel writes (ii. 32): "*In Mount Zion* and in Jerusalem *shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said*, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call": and this may very well be an appeal to Obad. 17: "*But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance*," which is followed by a promise to the scattered remnant of Judah and Israel.

If these inferences are sound, the literary phenomena of the book combine with its historical references to show that Obadiah's true place in the canon is not after Amos, but rather between Isaiah and Jeremiah, and that he belongs to the

[1] Compare Jer. xlviii. 29, 30; xlix. 27, with Isa. xvi. 6, and Amos i. 4.

[2] Pusey, "Minor Prophets," p. 228. "Jeremiah reset the words of Obadiah."

group of the Minor Prophets who wrote at the period of the Exile. His style, however, is full of individuality, and he uses several peculiar words. His book is a favourite study of the Jews, and it is chiefly from this book that they learnt to apply the name Edom to Rome, to Christians, and to all their enemies.

Nothing can be simpler than the outline of the prophecy.[1] It falls into two clearly marked divisions, of which the first (1–16) denounces destruction to Edom, and the second (17–21) prophecies the restoration of Israel.

I. The first division falls into three sections, namely :

a. The prophecy of Edom's punishment (1–9).

b. The guilt that has called down the vengeance (10–14).

c. The law of retribution upon the heathen in general (15, 16).

The sequence of thought is as follows :

a. After the title of the book, as a vision concerning Edom, Obadiah says that he and his countrymen have heard from Jehovah of an ambassador who has gone forth among the heathen to rouse them to battle against Edom (1). She thinks herself secure in the clefts of the rock—in her city of Petra, built along the high cliffs of the Sîk ; but though she exalts herself as the eagle, and sets her nest among the stars,[2] Jehovah shall bring her down, and make her small among the heathen (2–4). It is no mere predatory band that shall rob her ; no grape gatherers, who will leave behind at least a gleaning of her vintage (5) ; but she shall be searched and spoiled to the depths of her hidden treasures (6). Her allies—whether the neighbouring tribes, or the Chaldeans with whom she had joined in the destruction of Jerusalem—shall prove treacherous, and make a snare of her very table, a wound or net of the bread which they have eaten with her,[3] and shall laugh at the simplicity of the people who could put faith in their professions of friendliness (7). And no wonder ! For God has altogether frustrated the famed wisdom of Edom's wise men,[4] so that all the inhabitants of Mount Seir shall be cut off by slaughter (8, 9).

[1] Among special commentaries may be mentioned that of Caspari (Leipzig, 1842).

[2] Dr. Pusey quotes from V. Schubert and other authors abundant descriptions of the rocky fastnesses of Petra. See, too, Miss Martineau's "Eastern Life," ii. 320 ; Tristram's "Natural History of the Bible," 175.

[3] Comp. Psa. lxix. 22. [4] Comp. Jer. xlix. 7 ; Baruch iii. 22, 23.

And why must this be?

b. It is the penalty of Edom's adherence to the foreign invaders who had divided by lot the spoils and captives of Jerusalem (10, 11). And then, as though in prophetic warning against the very sins by which they had filled to the brim the cup of their iniquity, "he dehorts them from malicious rejoicing at their brother's fall," first in look and word (12), then in overt act and share in their spoliation (13), then by cutting off their fugitives at the crossways, and delivering up to the enemy their scattered remnant (13, 14).[1] Such had been Edom's crime—"malicious gazing on human calamity, forgetful of man's common origin, and common liability to ill, which is the worst form of human hate. It was," says Dr. Pusey, "one of the contumelies of the cross, 'They gaze, they look with joy upon Me.'"[2]

c. Therefore Edom shall be cut off for ever; but not Edom alone. The heathen in general shall have to face that "day of the Lord" in which the reward of their misdeeds shall fall upon their own heads (15). The children of God's chosen people upon His holy mountain have been compelled for *their* sins also to taste the cup of His displeasure; but from them that cup shall pass away when its bitter and healing medicine has done its work. Not so shall it be with the more guilty heathen: they shall drink of that cup continually, and be as though they had not been (16).[3]

II. As is so common among the Hebrew prophets, this first section of the prophecy which deals with the doom and threatening is followed by a second section in which there is a promise of restoration to Israel.

In Mount Zion shall be deliverance and holiness. The House of Jacob shall possess their dispossessors, and shall burn like an avenging flame for the total consumption of the stubble of the House of Esau (18).[4] The territories of Judah shall be extended. Those who had lived in the south shall possess the Mount of Esau; the dwellers in the maritime plain shall

[1] The true rendering in verses 12, 13, 14 is "Look not," "Speak not proudly," &c. See Pusey, "Minor Prophets," p, 228. [2] Psa. xxii. 17.

[3] Such seems to be the true meaning of this difficult verse. The key to the explanation of its imagery is furnished by Jer. xxv. 15–29; xlix. 12; Lam. iv. 21, 22.

[4] Comp. Numb. xxiv. 18, 19. The word in Obad. 18 for "him that remaineth" is the same as in Balaam's prophecy (*Sarîd*).

occupy Philistia; and they of the third or hill division shall spread over the lands of Ephraim and Samaria. And since Judah is thus to possess all the territory west of the Jordan, Gilead is assigned to the remaining tribe of Benjamin (19). But other captive Israelites are still unprovided for, and therefore the southern regions of the Holy Land shall be assigned to those of "*this* host (חַיִל=חֵל) of the children of Israel" whom the Phœnicians have carried captive to Zarephath—perhaps a body of exiles to whom Obadiah himself belonged—and to the captivity of Jerusalem which is in Sepharad (Sardis) (20).[1] And deliverers shall be raised on Mount Zion, as in the old days of the Judges, to judge the Mount of Esau. The prophecy ends with a glimpse of a yet wider horizon: "And the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

As regards the main prophecy against Edom it found abundant fulfilment. Edom felt secure in her rocky fastnesses, above all in the apparently impregnable gorge where Petra had been built like an eagle's nest. Nevertheless, the just judgment of God could not pass over the wicked ἐπιχαιρεκακία, that venomous malignity which triumphs in the misfortune and humiliation of others. Hence Edom was doomed to perish, and did perish, by a twofold destruction—at the hands of the heathen and at the hands of the Jews.

(i.) First of all the Chaldeans, whom she had aided and abetted, turned upon her, drove her from her possessions, used the pretext of mutual peace and hospitality for her overthrow, and laughed at her imbecile confidence in their fidelity (1, 2, 7). How this menace was fulfilled we do not know, but that it was fulfilled seems certain. For when Obadiah wrote (about 585) the Edomites seem to have been still secure in their clefts of rock; but in the time of Antigonus (B.C. 312) another race—the Nabathæans—were in possession of Petra.[2] And Josephus tells us that after the capture of Jerusalem Nebuchadrezzar subdued the Ammonites and Moabites,[3] and then, as Jeremiah had foretold (xliii. 8–13), "fell upon Egypt to overthrow it"; and it appears further from Jeremiah (xxvii. 3–6)

[1] The verse is differently translated in our A. V., but the best sense is furnished by the rendering here adopted. The LXX. read Ephratah for Sepharad, and in Jerome's time the reading seems to have been Euphrates. Ewald preferred to read *Sepharam*, a place in North Palestine.

[2] Diod. Sic. xix. 730. [3] "Ant.," x. 9 § 7.

that Edom was among the countries that God had given into the hands of the Chaldean king. There can therefore be little doubt that the exultation of Edom over fallen Jerusalem was short-lived. And thus does—

> "Evenhanded justice
> Commend the ingredients of the poisoned chalice
> To our own lips."[1]

ii. But, further, Obadiah prophesied that in the day of universal retribution Edom should perish with all the heathen (15), and should be devoured by the fire of the House of Jacob and Joseph (18), and their land possessed by those who had dwelt in the southern divisions of Judah (19). This, too, was generally accomplished. Judas Maccabeus, in B.C. 166, dispossessed the Edomites from Hebron and Southern Palestine, and John Hyrcanus in B.C. 135 took some of the Idumean cities, and forced their inhabitants to submit to "the rest of the Jewish ways of living. At which time, therefore, this befel them, that they were hereafter none other than Jews."[2] Lastly, in the final war against Rome (B.C. 66),[3] Simon of Gerasa devastated the whole Idumean country with fire and sword, and that with so consummate a ravage that "there was no sign remaining of those places that had been laid waste, that ever they had a being."[4]

In the eschatology of Obadiah there is little which distinguishes him from other prophets. The features on which he dwells—the deliverance of the captives of Judah, the sanctity of Mount Zion, the judgment of the heathen, the establishment of Jehovah's kingdom—are those which are common to nearly all the prophets from the days of Amos, and still more from the days of Isaiah.

[1] See Ewald, "History of Israel," iv. 276, Eng. tr.
[2] 1 Macc. v. 3, 65. Josephus, "Ant.," xii. 8 § 6.
[3] Josephus, "Ant.," xiii. 9, § 1. [4] Josephus, "Bell. Jud.," iv. 9, § 7.

CHAPTER XVII.

HAGGAI.

Haggai—Beginning of an inferior order of Prophets—The returning exiles —Analysis of the book—Its difficulties.

CHRONOLOGY AFTER THE EXILE.

B.C.	
536.	Cyrus.
—	Return of the Exiles under Zerubbabel and Jeshua.
534.	Temple foundation laid.
529.	Cambyses.
522.	Pseudo-Smerdis.
—	Edict prohibiting the continuance of the building.
521.	Darius Hystaspis.
520.	Haggai } begin to prophesy.
—	Zechariah }
517.	Completion of Temple.
486.	Xerxes (Ahasuerus of Esther).
465.	Artaxerxes I. (Longimanus).
458.	Return of Ezra.
444.	Nehemiah visits Jerusalem.
433.	Nehemiah returns to Persia.
425.	Death of Artaxerxes.
—	Return of Nehemiah to Jerusalem.
—	Approximate date of Malachi.

WITH Haggai we enter upon a new and unquestionably inferior phase of prophecy, that of the prophets who lived after the Exile. Prophets they still were, and their utterances still possess the highest importance; but they are lacking in the impassioned fervour, the splendid poetry, the penetrating style of their greater predecessors. It is impossible to conceive of Isaiah or Habakkuk writing in the style of Haggai, and deeming it necessary to adopt the same straining of emphasis in the reiterations of the Divine name.[1] Their comparative poverty of thought and expression reflects the depressed and humble circumstances of their nation in the days in which they wrote. Israel had disappeared; Judah had a king no longer; the mass of the nation lived in scattered communities of exiles in Babylonia and Assyria; those who had returned were few in number, insignificant in importance. Judea—which had risen to such splendour in the days of David and Solomon; which had maintained her independence for five centuries under

[1] As in the *constant* repetition of, "saith the Lord of Hosts."

a long line of Davidic kings; which had seen the armies of Assyria melt away from beneath her walls; which had not only defied the neighbouring powers of Phœnicia and the Philistines on the east, and of Edom and Moab on the west, but had even been able to hold her own against the towering ambition of the dynasties of Syria and of Egypt—had now at last sunk into one of the pettiest and most wretched fractions of a satrapy of the Persian Empire, and had become the laughingstock of contemptible local princelings, without any power to protect herself from insult.

The exiles, with what was left of the Temple vessels which Nebuchadrezzar had taken away, returned under the care of Zerubbabel (called by the Persians, Sheshbazzar), and of Jeshua the high priest, in accordance with the decree of Cyrus, B.C. 536. Zerubbabel was invested by the Persian king with the office of *Pechâh* or governor.[1] During the next two years they set up the great altar of burnt sacrifice, and laid the foundation of the Temple amid the mingled sounds of joy and weeping. When this was done the Samaritans and others, who were partly idolaters as well as partly worshippers of Jehovah, wished to be allowed a share in the building. Their overtures were rejected, and Rehum and Shimshai at once plotted against the Jews, and so effectually aroused the jealousy of the Persian Court that the building was hindered during the reigns of Cyrus and Artaxerxes I. and down to B.C. 520, the second year of Darius Hystaspes.[2] It was at this time that Haggai and Zechariah began to awaken the long-silent voice of prophecy, and it was their main function to arouse the Jews to renew their efforts. The satrap Tatnai with Shethar-boznai, appealed to Darius to know whether the Jews had his sanction for this new enterprize. The original decree of Cyrus permitting the building of the Temple was discovered in the Persian archives, and Darius renewed it. The satrap was sternly ordered to see the work expedited, and thus the temple was finished and dedicated about B.C. 515, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius. These facts are related in Ezra i–vi., and they accord with the data which we derive from the contemporary prophets.[3]

[1] The name has no connection with *Pacha*.

[2] Ezra iv. 23, 24. There must have been, however, much languor and neglect on the part of the Jews themselves.

[3] Some have supposed that Haggai was the author of parts of Ezra iii. 2–vi.

The name Haggai means "the Festal,"[1] and probably indicates that he was born on some Jewish feast-day. Although he is mentioned with Zechariah in Ezra v. 1., vi. 14, he was probably much older than his colleague. He has carefully preserved even to the very day the date of his prophecies, which were confined to the narrow period of four months. They all belong to B.C. 520, and were delivered in the sixth, seventh, and ninth months of that year, whereas the oldest prophecies of Zechariah were spoken in the eighth and eleventh months of the same year. No doubt they were delivered orally, in the hearing of the people gathered together at the festivals of the new moon and of Tabernacles, and at the period of the autumn rains. They all centre in the one object of demanding and encouraging the completion of the Temple, of which as yet only the foundations had been laid. The first address reproaches the people for indolently listening to the dilatory and interested advisers who tried to persuade them that the time for continuing the work was not opportune (i. 2–11). The second encourages them with the assurance that the latter glory of the house shall be greater than the former (ii. 1–9). The third promises them that from the day when they seriously undertook the task, God's anger, which had long been shown in years of drought and famine, should be changed into blessing shown by fruitful harvests (ii. 10–19). The fourth conveys a brief special promise to the Davidic prince Zerubbabel.

We know nothing more of Haggai.[2] We might ask with surprise why he should have remained silent from B.C. 535 to B.C. 520; and have then suddenly sprung into activity to demand, in conjunction with Zechariah, the resumption of the neglected task of restoring the House of God. The reason is, perhaps, to be found in the prophecy of Jeremiah (xxv. 11), and

[1] Or, perhaps, "my feasts," or "feasts of Jehovah" (if abbreviated from Haggiah, 1 Chron. vi. 30).

[2] In the Vulgate Psa. cxi. is called *Alleluia reversionis Aggei et Zachariae;* and Psa. cxlv. *Alleluia Aggei et Zachariae.* In the LXX. his name is prefixed, with that of Zechariah, to Psalms cxxxviii. cxlvi–cxlviii. and in the Peshito to Psalms cxxvi., cxxvii., cxlvi–cxlviii., and as some of these are the Psalms known as "the five Hallelujahs," there arose a legend (mentioned by Pseudo-Epiphanius) that "Haggai was the first to chant the Hallelujah in the Temple" (Mr. Jennings, in Bp. Ellicott's Commentary). Haggai is alluded to in 1 Esdr. vi. 1, vii. 3; 2 Esdr. i. 40; and his prophecies in Ecclus. xlix. 11; Heb. xii. 26.

the approaching completion of the seventy years during which he had prophesied that the house should be desolate. This, together with the providential change in the Persian Government, when Darius revolted against the Magian usurper Pseudo-Smerdis, may have aroused Haggai to his sense of a Divine call. Jerusalem had been destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar, B.C. 586; by the time of the completion of the Temple the seventy years of its ruin were fulfilled.

Though the style of Haggai is prosaic, and full of repetitions, the success which attended his exhortations is a sufficient proof that they were well adapted for their purpose.

First address.—*Arise and Build* (i. 1–11).

Haggai tells us with exactness that the word of the Lord came to him, "in the second year of Darius the king (B.C. 520),[1] in the sixth month (Elul, or part of September), on the first day of the month." No doubt at the new moon the people would be assembled, and the lack of any sacred building would be more pressingly felt. The prophecy was addressed to Zerubbabel, son of Pedaiah (1 Chron. iii. 19), grandson of Shealtiel, and legal if not actual grandson of Jehoiachin or Jeconiah, who had been carried captive to Babylon;[2] and to Jeshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, whose father Seraiah had been killed by Nebuchadrezzar.[3] They were the two chief rulers. Zerubbabel had been appointed by Cyrus to be governor of Judah, the designation which was now given to the Holy Land in general.[4]

There were many who dissuaded the Jews from any attempt to rear the superstructure of the Temple upon the foundations which had been laid more than fourteen years before. They argued that the time had not yet come. Haggai asks them whether, then, it was time for them to dwell in their own ceiled houses while the House of God lay waste?[5] He bids them in the name of Jehovah to look at the predominant wretchedness

[1] The prophecy is naturally dated from the reign of the Persian king, since Zerubbabel was not an independent prince.

[2] See 1 Chron. iii. 17, 19. On his descent see the commentators.

[3] 1 Chron. vi. 15; 2 Kings xxv. 18; Jer. lii. 24. Jeshua had himself been taken into captivity, and must therefore at this time have been an old man.

[4] Comp. Gen. xlix. 10.

[5] Their feelings were a great contrast to those of David (2 Sam. vii. 2 Psa. cxxxii. 4).

of their present circumstances. There was no prosperity in the community; all their undertakings were smitten with failure. If they sought the explanation of this unsuccess let them consider their ways, and then go up to the mountains and hew down wood, and build the House of God to His honour. Their neglect of this duty has been the cause of their bad harvests in the prevailing drought (2–11).

This, with a good deal of repetition and emphasis, is the single thought and message of the first address, which is, however, accompanied by the promise: "And I will take pleasure in it, and will be glorified, saith the Lord." By some accident the word "and I will be glorified" (ואכבד) has not got the paragogic letter ה at the end of it. The Jews in this, as in every minute variation of any letter in the text, saw a hidden mystery.[1] The letter ה stands for 5 and they therefore argued that, in spite of the glory of the latter house, five things would be wanting to it. They were not exactly agreed as to what the five things were, but usually enumerated them as being —1. The ark and its mercy-seat. 2. The Shechinah, or glory-cloud in the Holiest. 3. The fire that descended from heaven. 4. The Urim and Thummim, and—5. The Spirit of Prophecy.

The limitation of Haggai's message, and the narrowness of his appeal, no less than the tedious movement of his style, mark that low-water of national depression which even affected the prophets themselves. He sees his countrymen unsuccessful, greedy for self-interest, egotistically occupied in building and adorning their own houses, dead to patriotic inspiration, and listening to selfish excuses. Meanwhile the free and splendid voice of prophecy had been weakened by the burdensome pressure of Levitism, and the spiritual timidity connected with small scrupulosities of external service. Haggai is "the most matter-of-fact of all the prophets"—*omnino prosaicus*, as Bishop Louth calls him. He seems to conceive of the religious influences of the Messianic age as all radiating from a material Temple, which yet passed away shortly after the Saviour's Advent, and had neither successor nor counterpart in the New Dispensation. Instead of arousing them with such trumpet-blasts of moral awakenment as Amos and Isaiah had breathed of old, Haggai mainly appeals to motives of temporal expediency. He does not stir them to

[1] Yoma, fol. 21b.

high aspirations after ideal and spiritual blessings, but only reproaches them for the single fault of neglecting the material Temple, and urges them to the duty of building it by a promise of material prosperity. His message to Zerubbabel and Jeshua as representatives of the people reduces itself to this—You have had drought and poverty; therefore build the Temple. So far as his actual language goes, he only dwells on an external remedy for an external disadvantage. The blame, however, does not lie with him. A commonplace people is hardly capable of listening to any except an ordinary prophet, and by the faithful discharge of the small and narrow mission which was alone assigned to him, Haggai paved the way for better things.

His message he tells us was successful. God stirred up the spirit of the rulers and the people to perform His own will, and twenty-four days later some beginning of the work was actually made, which was encouraged by the brief message of the prophet to the builders that God was with them (i. 12–15).

Second address.—*Comfort and promise* (ii. 1–9).

A month elapsed, and on the twenty-first day of the seventh month (Tisri)[1] namely, on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, in October,[2] Haggai was again sent to address God's message to the people and their chiefs, whose zeal was little better than fire in straw, and had apparently died out.

All the old men who had seen the Temple of Solomon before its destruction by the Babylonians, could not but be struck by the comparative poverty of the second House. It is true that there was no great difference in the dimensions, which were intended to cover the same space; but whereas, in the days of Solomon, there had been immense preparations of hewn marble, and gold, and silver, and brass, and cedar wood, and other precious materials, the rising House spoke necessarily of the poverty-stricken efforts of a band of returning exiles. Where was the golden ark, with its priceless treasures and its rich associations? Where was the breastplate of oracular gems? Where the molten sea, and its supporting oxen? Where the two magnificent pillars, Jachin and Boaz? As they asked these questions, the people might well feel discouraged.

[1] Its proper Jewish name was *Ethanim*, 1 Kings viii. 2.

[2] Lev. xxiii. 34.

The prophet is bidden to rouse these drooping hopes by the promise of future glories. They were to be strong, for God was with them, and had not forgotten His old covenant in the day of their deliverance from Egypt. The day was near at hand[1] when He would shake the earth, and the sea, and all nations,[2] and the desirable things of all nations should come to that house, and its latter glory should be greater, "and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts" (ii. 1–9).

This is the most remarkable part of Haggai's prophecy. The people had girded themselves to their sacred task; his next object was to encourage them in its accomplishment. He animates their small faith, and kindles their dwindling courage by a definite and magnificent promise. We are accustomed to speak of "the Temple of Solomon"; "the Temple of Zerubbabel"; "the Temple of Herod"; but to the Jews the Temple was throughout the ages one and the same, and Haggai did not say, as in our Authorised Version, "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former," but rather, "the latter glory of this house shall be greater." And this latter glory should be twofold. After some dread manifestation of Jehovah's power and presence, the nations should bring into this Temple their costliest treasures, and from it they should receive something more costly than all their treasures—even the gift of peace.

The translation of the Vulgate, "*Et veniet desideratus cunctis gentibus*" has been perpetuated by Luther's "*Da soll dann kommen aller Heiden Trost*," and by the translation of our Authorised Version "*and the desire of all nations shall come.*" And this has been interpreted to be a direct prophecy of the visits of Christ to this later Temple. The translation is untenable. The verb is in the plural, and the words merely imply, what was also promised in Isa. lx. 5–13, that the nations should bring to the second Temple their costly treasures. The promise was fulfilled by the splendid gifts which the Temple received from Darius (Ezra vi. 6–12), Artaxerxes (Ezra vii. 12–26) and other later Gentile princes (2 Macc. iii. 2; Josephus, "Bell. Jud.," ii. 17, 3); and still more by the splendid

[1] Ver. 6, "It is yet a little while." Ewald compares the German phrase, *noch eine Minute*.

[2] Quoted and adopted in Heb. xii. 26–29.

donations of Herod, the princes of Adiabene, and many others.[1] Haggai has no definite prophecy of Christ in this passage as was supposed, yet only in Christ, and in the fact that He taught in the Temple, does this prophecy receive its ideal fulfilment. To Haggai the time of the mighty shaking of the nations—the fall of Persia before Greece, the splitting asunder of the Empire of Alexander, the wars of Syria and Egypt, the dominance and ultimate fall of Rome—seemed close at hand, but it was only close at hand in the eyes of Him to whom a thousand years are as one day. The birth of the Messiah was still more than five hundred years distant; but the epoch which should be concluded by His birth had already begun, and the preliminary tremors of that vast earthquake which ultimately shook down the Jewish polity and the glory of Greece and the Roman Empire were not long delayed. Haggai's words were more limited than the facts which corresponded to them. His Temple was the humble building of stone, but the Temple of which it was the symbol was the Church of God; and the glory of the temple of the Exiles was not to consist in riches and jewels which were to be contributed to it by all nations, but in the Incarnate Presence of the Son of God.

Third address.—*A promise that plenty shall reward the fulfilment of the duty* (ii. 10–19).

Again, two months later, on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (*Kisleu*), at the falling of the earlier rain in December, the prophet has his message to deliver. Nearly four months had elapsed since the utterance of his first message, and as yet the condition of the people had not materially altered. The object of his present address, apparently, was to tell the people that the promised blessing is only to count "*from this day*"—perhaps the day when all the arrangements had been fully made, and when, at some festal gathering, stone again began to be laid on stone. To bring this home to the people, he asks them, or rather asks the priests in their presence, two questions pertaining to minutiæ of the ceremonial law. If a priest carries in his robe the flesh of a sacrifice, the robe (according to Lev. vi. 27) is regarded as holy. But if the

[1] There was a sort of foreshadowing of its fulfilment in the offerings brought by wealthy Babylonian exiles (Zech. vi. 8, 10-15).

skirt of his robe touches bread, pottage, oil, wine, or flesh, does that become holy? The Halacha of the priests—*i.e.*, the ceremonial rule which they derived inferentially and from tradition —answered No!

But again, supposing a man has become unclean by touching a dead body, and then touched any of these things, would they become thereby unclean? The priests, in accordance with the Halacha, derived immediately from Numbers xix. 22, answered Yes!

Even so, said the Prophet, "is this people and this nation before Me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there"—pointing, no doubt, to the great altar of burnt sacrifice which had been erected immediately after their return—"is unclean."

This was certainly a discouraging and startling message, and if taken very literally seems to rest on narrow and ceremonial grounds. But it has a true general meaning, and one of great importance. It implies that holiness is less diffusive and penetrating in its influence than sin; and that a partial externalism would not atone for a great transgression. Everything the people had done, even their imperfect fragment of self-chosen worship, had been thoroughly vitiated by the deep offence of caring more for themselves and their own houses than for the honour of God. A ceremonial cleanness which such worship involved did not spread over the nation.

So then the "cleanness," the "holiness," of the people, and the consequent beginning of material blessing in the form of richer harvests, were only to date from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, the time of the early rain.

This again seems hard. For the people had now been at work for three months, and surely the will and the effort constituted the praiseworthiness of their conduct, not the mere material act of having completed the necessary preparations and beginning the actual structure. Some have conjectured that i. 15 is a later gloss; that the work in no real sense *began* until the date now given, and that it began by laying the foundation stone, and perhaps by relaying the stone which, according to Ezra iii. 8–12, had been laid in B.C. 535.

Fourth address.—*A special promise to Zerubbabel.* The fourth message which Haggai had to deliver came to him on

the same day. He was bidden to tell Zerubbabel again that God would shake earth and heaven; that He would overthrow the might of the kingdoms of the heathen, and they should perish by mutual slaughter, but "in that day" the Lord of hosts should take Zerubbabel, and make him as a signet,[1] for He had chosen him.

So far as Zerubbabel is concerned the prophecy seems to point to a distant and ideal fulfilment. We are not aware that any of the terrific commotions among heathen nations occurred in his lifetime, and he seems to have been personally deficient in energy, and of such small significance that he has left hardly any traces of himself in the history or traditions of his people. But ideally and prophetically regarded, Zerubbabel occupies a very different position. "How shall we magnify Zorobabel?" asks the son of Sirach; "even he was as a signet on the right hand: so was Jesus, the son of Josedec; who in their time builded the house, and set up an holy temple to the Lord which was prepared for everlasting glory."[2] He is "the highest branch of the high cedar planted in the heights of the mountain of Israel" of Ezekiel's prophecy,[3] under whose shadow should dwell all fowls of every wing, and in whom all the trees of the field should recognize that the Lord brings down the high tree, and exalts the low tree, dries up the green tree, and makes the dry tree flourish. To Zerubbabel himself the promise was doubtless fulfilled in individual blessedness, but to the line which descended from him, and centred in him, it was accomplished with infinite fulness. Through him were preserved to David's house "the sure mercies of David," and in both the genealogies of the Lord Jesus—alike in that of St. Matthew and in that of St. Luke—the name of Zerubbabel stands conspicuously enshrined.[4]

Apart from the prophetic intimations of Haggai we may see three great moral truths involved in his teaching.

1- The first is that faithfulness is directly connected with material prosperity. He is commissioned to tell his people that even the blessings of the earth may depend—though they do not always and necessarily depend—on the honour which they pay to God.

2- A second is that discouragement however profound is not an

[1] Cant. viii. 6; Jer. xxii. 24.
[2] Ecclus. xlix. 11.
[3] Ezek. xvii. 22-24.
[4] Matt. i. 12; Luke iii. 27.

adequate reason for neglecting duties, even when they seem to be encompassed with difficulty. "Be strong and work" is a glorious motto for human life.

A third is that when a good work is awaiting its accomplishment, the time to do it is *now*. Thousands are always eager to find excuses for procrastination. But the procrastination of duty is an offence in the eyes of God, and we cannot look for His blessing until our work is strenuously taken in hand.

Thus we find in Haggai, as in all the prophets, "that sin brings judgment; that judgment means mercy, and is designed for correction; that repentance secures the forgiveness of sin; and that amendment of life has power to turn the life, has power to turn the very curse of God into a benediction."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ZECHARIAH.[1]

The name Zechariah—Various bearers of the name—Whose son?—Iddo—Time and outline of his prophecy. 1. First address: *Repent.* i. First vision: The angel riders. ii. The four horses and four smiths. iii. The Restoration of Jerusalem. iv. The Priesthood and the Branch. v. The golden candelabrum. vi. The roll and the ephah. vii. The four chariots—Historic appendices: 1. The crowning of the High Priest. 2. The question about fasting.

THE name Zechariah—"the Lord remembers"—is a common one. The prophet of this name who wrote the first eight chapters of this book was a contemporary of Haggai, and his chief task, like that of his older colleague, was to rouse the people to rebuild their ancient temple (Ezra v. 1; vi. 1). In Ezra he is called "the son of Iddo;" he is here called "the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo." Since the prophet Zechariah, who was stoned to death by the people at the commandment of King Joash as a reward for his faithfulness, was a son of the High Priest *Jehoiada* (2 Chron. xxiv. 20), and since there is no tradition or probability that the contemporary of Haggai died by martyrdom, it is a not improbable conjecture that the reference to the murdered Zechariah in Matt. xxiii. 35 as a "son of *Berechiah*" results from some confusion of the original text. There is yet another "Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah," who is mentioned in Isaiah (viii. 2), and since the author of the chapters ix.–xi. in the present book is different from the author of the first eight chapters, Bleek and others have supposed that these three chapters were written by the Zechariah whom Isaiah knew, and that the words "son of Berechiah" in the first verse have been transferred from the original heading of

[1] Among recent monographs on Zechariah may be mentioned the elaborate Bampton Lectures of Rev. Dr. C. H. Wright, 1878. There is a paper on "The Origin of the Book of Zechariah," by Prof. Cheyne in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1888.

Zech. ix. 1. This is only a conjecture. The names seem to have been borne by several persons of note, and there is no difficulty in the fact that the author of these eight chapters should be called indifferently the "son of Berechiah," or—from his better-known grandfather—the son of Iddo; just as in Gen. xxix. 5 Laban is called the son of Nahor, though he was really the son of Bethuel.

We learn from Nehemiah (xii. 4–16) that Iddo was the head of one of the priestly houses, and since he returned from the Exile with Zechariah his grandson, the prophet must have begun his work while still a young man.[1]

Like Haggai, he began to prophecy in the second year of Darius (B.C. 520), in the eighth month. The remainder of his genuine prophecy was delivered two years later in the fourth year of Darius (Zech. vii. 1). The general bearing of his prophecy resembles that of Haggai, but it is richer in extent and more original in form. The first six chapters narrate seven visions, all of which passed before the mind of the prophet in a single night, and of which the explanations are furnished. Nightly vision was one of the recognized sources of prophetic inspiration; and we find visions recorded by Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Those of Zechariah are less striking and less vivid, and we may trace in them the influences of the Exile, which also accounts for the inferiority of style, and for the use of the Chaldee names of the months. St. Jerome complains bitterly of the enigmatic character of the visions, and modern critics have seen in them a deficiency of true imaginative power. The form and style of the message belong in every case to the individuality of the prophet, and are moulded by the circumstances of his education and his times; but we cannot doubt that the prophecies of Zechariah were thrown into the form which made them most effective for the end in view, and though they are marked by the depression of his age they are not destitute either of poetic beauty or of theological depth.

They open with an exhortation to repentance (i. 1–6), which is followed by the seven visions (i. 7–vi.), each followed by special remarks and explanations. Their purpose is to encourage and exhort, and they revert frequently to the topic of the punishment

[1] Some refer the expression "this young man" in Zech. ii. 4 to the prophet, but it is applied apparently to the angel with the measuring line.

of the heathen and the future exaltation of Jerusalem, her priesthood, and her princely line (iii., iv.), after she has been purified from her sins of dishonesty and perjury (v.). The second prophecy (vii., viii.) bears on the question of days of fasting, which shall be turned into feasts in the day when Jerusalem, restored to happiness by a purer morality, shall become a source of blessing to all the world.

The remaining chapters (ix.–xiv.) will be dealt with separately when we have entered into the reasons which convince us that they are written by different prophets from the Zechariah who wrote the first eight.

I. First address.—*Repent* (i. 1–6).

This prophecy, like those which follow till the end of the sixth chapter, was spoken in the eighth month, Bul (part of November), which was afterwards called Marchesvan. It comes between the second and third addresses of Haggai. The style, like that of Haggai, is marked by a certain heaviness due to constant repetitions, and especially by the frequency of the phrase, "saith the Lord of hosts." The Jews are not at once urged to work at the building of the Temple, for, as Haggai tells us, that task was already in hand; but they are bidden to take to heart the fate of their fathers to whom the former prophets had spoken in vain,[1] and upon whom had fallen the punishment of exile. Those fathers were dead, and the prophets who had spoken to them; let their sons learn from the new race of prophets without the same lessons of bitter experience.

i. First vision (i. 7–17).—*The angel riders.* This and the following visions were seen on the night which began the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month,[2] the month here called by its Chaldean name of Shebat (February), two months later than the last prophecy of Haggai.

The prophet sees an angel mounted on a red horse,[3] standing among the myrtle-trees in the valley under the Temple-hill. He is the angel of the Lord's host, the angel of the Presence, and

[1] There seems to be special reference to Hos. xiv. 2, 3; Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 2 Kings xvii 13. [2] Among the Hebrews the day begins at sunset.

[3] Ewald thinks that the words "riding upon a bright red horse" should be omitted; and that, as in the final vision, there should be *four* sets of horses—red for the east, black for the north, grey for the west, and spotted for the south. But all attempts to give a mystic significance to the myrtles and the colour of the horses rest on very uncertain data.

behind him ride a multitude of other angels on red, sorrel, and white horses. Addressing him, the prophet says, "O, my Lord, what are these?" The prophet's own angel, who reveals to him subjectively what the angel of Jehovah objectively sets before him, promises to him the explanation,[1] and it is given by the great leader of the host, who says that God has sent these riders to and fro in the earth. Then they reply that they have gone to and fro, and the earth sitteth still, and is at rest (7–11).

Where, then, was that shaking of the nations which God had promised, and which must precede the enthronization of Jerusalem as the city of God? The angel of Jehovah cries to Him, "How long, O Lord of hosts, wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, against which Thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"[2] Jehovah answered the angel with good and comfortable words; and the angel of the prophet bids him tell his people that God is sore displeased with the heathen because they have overdone the infliction of His wrath upon Jerusalem, and the city shall once more be restored to a Divine prosperity. It has been supposed that the symbol of the mounted angels was suggested to (12–17) Zechariah by the famous courier-posts of Persia,[3] but they seem rather to be chariot-riders though their time for battle has not yet come, and the colours of their war steeds are emblems of blood, and fire, and triumph. That the leader of the host is mounted on a blood-red horse shows that the day of the wars of God is near, and when it breaks forth, the scornful and indolent heathen shall see the city which they despise exalted to be the head of the whole earth.

We observe at once that we have now reached the beginning of that apocalyptic era of Jewish literature which shortly afterwards entirely superseded the prophetic, and produced a mass of writings of which the most celebrated are the apocryphal books of Esdras and Enoch; and the Revelation of St. John has also been largely influenced in its external form by the visions of Zechariah.

ii. Second vision.—*The four horns and the four smiths* (i. 18-21). The prophet sees four horns (of iron), the symbol of heathen power and oppression which have scattered Judah and

[1] See V. Orelli, p. 367. LXX. ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοί.

[2] See Jer. xxv. 11, xxix. 10.

[3] Hdt. iii. 126; viii. 98. Xen. "Cyrop." viii. 6, 17.

Jerusalem,[1] and four smiths who are to harry those horns and cast them out. The general meaning of the symbol is simply the approaching judgment of the heathen. The number four does not seem to point to any four special heathen nations, such as the Assyrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians, but is the number of completeness; and the four smiths do not point to four separate deliverers, but imply that the defence shall be as strong as the assault has been.

iii. Third vision.—*The Restoration of Jerusalem* (ii. 1–13). The prophet sees an angel with a measuring-line going to measure the length and breadth of Jerusalem. He asks where the angel is going. His own angel—the *angelus interpres*—comes forth and is met by another angel who bids him go and tell the angel with the measuring-line that he is mistaken in his attempt to measure Jerusalem, for it is to be as an open country, since no walls could contain its multitude of men[2] and cattle, and for safety Jehovah will be its wall of fire. The judgment of the heathen is near at hand, therefore let the daughter of Zion flee from doomed Chaldea,[3] for God will scatter her enemies, and she shall be as the apple of His eye.[4] Let her sing and rejoice, for the Lord will dwell in the midst of her, and many nations shall join themselves to Him and become His people. "Be silent, O all flesh before the Lord, for He is raised up out of His holy habitation!"[5]

We see here, as in so many passages of the Prophets, that the *judgment* of the heathen is a part of the *redemption* of the heathen, and that their destruction is an element of their future share in the blessings of the covenant.

iv. Fourth vision.—*The restoration of the priesthood; the prophecy of the* BRANCH (iii. 1–10). The prophet sees a vision of the judgment-seat. Joshua the high priest stands on one side before the Angel of the Presence, and at the right hand of the accused stands Satan his accuser.[6] The high priest is clad

[1] Comp. Dan. vii. 20. The "Israel" in i. 19 should perhaps be omitted as in the LXX. (comp. Mal. ii. 11).

[2] See Josephus, "Bell. Jud." v. 4, § 92.

[3] Babylon was twice taken in the reign of Darius. "Records of the Past" i. 118–125 (Behistun inscription).

[4] Lit., "the *gate* of His eye," not as in Deut. xxxii. 10.

[5] Comp. Jer. xxv. 30; Zeph. i. 7; Hab. ii. 20. The heathen began to know more about Judaism after the Captivity.

[6] Possibly the scene was idealized from the fact that the High

in the dark garments of woe, as the representative of a guilty and neglectful priesthood. But Jehovah rebukes the Satan, for as He has chosen Jerusalem, so has He chosen the priesthood, and Joshua is a brand plucked out of the burning. And by His angel He bids those who stand before Him (apparently the friends of Joshua, who are subordinate priests) to disrobe the priest from his weeds of woe, and clothe him in festal apparel,[1] and He says, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass away from thee, and I will clothe thee with festal robes." Then the prophet asks that a fair mitre may be set on the high priest's head, and it is done, and he is promised that if he will be faithful his place shall be among those angels that stand by, and with them he shall have free access to the throne of God. And he and his fellow-priests are to be "men of portent," *i.e.*, types[2] of Him who is to be the BRANCH, namely the Promised Messiah.[3] Before the eyes of Joshua He has laid a stone—perhaps the famous rock on which rested the Ark of the Covenant, or that on which (according to the Talmud)[4] the high priest used to place the censer of incense—and this stone He Himself watches, so that (as it were) the seven eyes of His mercy[5] are always

Priest may have been persecuted by either an actual or threatened accusation in the Persian Court. His accusation seems to have no connection with his allowing his sons to marry heathen wives with which the Rabbis connect it. He stands as a general representative of the sins of the priesthood (Ezek. xxii. 26).

[1] Comp. Isa. lxi. 10. In these visions Jehovah and the angel of the Presence are used almost interchangeably, and the words spoken are attributed sometimes to one sometimes to the other—the Angel of the Presence is indeed regarded as the visible manifestation of God.

[2] Comp. Isa. viii. 18.

[3] See Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15, and comp. Isa. iv. 2; xi. 1; liii. 2; Zech. vi. 12. It is a little surprising that the Messiah is not called "*David's* branch." The name of David does not occur in Haggai or Zechariah. The LXX. renders "Branch" by *ἀνατολήν*, "day-spring" (comp. Isa. iv. 2. LXX.). Isaiah (xi. 1) uses the word *netser* not *tsemach* for "Branch" or "Shoot."

[4] Yoma 5, 2.

[5] Comp. iv. 10; Rev. i. 4; v. 6. The seven Archangels—the conception of which was perhaps borrowed from the seven Persian Amesha-Spentas—are symbols of the "seven Spirits of God." So Milton says:

> "One of the seven
> Who in God's Presence, nearest to His throne
> Stand ready at command, and are His eyes
> That run through all the heavens, or down to the earth
> Bear His swift errands."

fixed upon it. God will write the inscription upon that stone. In one day the iniquity of the land shall be removed, and the inhabitants shall live together in joy and peace and mutual love.

In this very memorable chapter Joshua is not considered individually but symbolically. There is then no need to ask the special sins of which he had been guilty, though we may infer with the Targum and the Rabbinic writers that he is punished for suffering his descendants to marry heathen wives, as is stated in Ezra (x. 18), and Nehemiah (xiii. 28). But the importance of Joshua as of Zerubbabel consisted mainly in their representative position. For he is a partial type of "the Branch," the Messiah, the Eternal Priest, who is to come, and whose coming shall imply the deliverance from sin which was but dimly foreshadowed by the Levitic sacrifices.

v. Fifth vision. — *The golden candelabrum. The Temple filled with the Spirit of God. Royalty and Priesthood the mediators of the Holy Spirit to the Church* (iv. 1–14). The angel interpreter awakes Zechariah as out of sleep, and he sees a golden candelabrum, like that which had existed in the old Temple, but different from it, and greatly superior. For on the top of it is a bowl, and it has seven lamps, and seven pipes to the lamp,[1] and on each side of this bowl an olive tree.[2] Since he cannot explain the meaning of the vision the angel tells him that it is meant to teach Zerubbabel that he is to rely wholly upon God. For just as the lamps of the candelabrum, which typify the presence of the Spirit of God in His Temple, are not supplied by human hands, but come direct from the olive trees, so he is to learn the lesson, "not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Why should he be daunted by difficulties? "Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubbabel? Be changed into a plain!" He has laid the foundation of the house, and He shall bring forth its coping-stone, while the glad multitude shout "Grace, grace to it!"[3] Henceforth who will despise the day of small things? The seven eyes of the Lord which run through the

Ewald thinks that seven eyes were actually engraved upon the stone; but "to put the eyes upon" is a metaphor for to watch and protect. See Jer. xxxix. 12; xl. 4.

[1] Lit., "Seven pipes apiece."

[2] Rev. xi. 4, *αἱ δύο ἐλαῖαι.*

[3] Ezra iii. 10; vi. 15.

whole earth see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, and they rejoice.

Desirous to understand this remarkable vision yet more fully, Zechariah asks the meaning of the two olive-trees, and the two olive-branches which at the side of the two golden tubes empty the golden oil out of themselves? He is told that they are the two "sons of oil,"[1] *i.e.*, the anointed Prince and the anointed Priest, who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

The vision is full of meaning and comfort. As the Temple had lost its Ark, and yet was still built over the sacred stone, engraved, as it were, by God's own finger, and watched by His seven eyes (iv. 9), even so, though it has lost the seven-branched golden candlestick, there should be another mystic one in its place, supplied by and symbolic of the Spirit of God. As in the last vision all accusations against the High Priest had been silenced by the word of God's rebuke, so now all difficulties before the Prince should be annihilated by the utterance of His power. Zerubbabel, who had laid the foundation of the Temple fifteen years before, shall live to hear the shouting multitude rejoicing as he sets its coping-stone. For the seven eyes have looked on the day of small things, and shall see with joy the achievement in which they end. Still more shall they see the glorious achievement which shall come not from Zerubbabel but from the *Branch* (iii. 8), who uniting the functions of the Anointed ones (Joshua and Zerubbabel) shall be a Priest upon His throne.

vi. Sixth double vision.—*The flying roll* (v. 1–4). *The guilt-laden ephah* (5–11). *The two-fold purification of the land.*

Again he uplifts his eyes and sees a colossal roll of a book on which is written a curse, flying over the whole land.[2] On one side of it, and on the other all thieves and all false swearers are cut off. For it enters their houses, and there, like a consuming fire, it consumes the timber and the stones of them to powder.

Thus the land is purified by the punishment of those who are guilty of the kindred sins of falsity in deed and falsity in word. But that it may be more completely purged the sins themselves no less than the sinners have to be removed. Accordingly the prophet next sees a colossal ephah measure—a

[1] Comp. Isa. v. 1, *marg.*

[2] Comp. Ezek. ii. 9, 10. The LXX. follows another reading—*δρέπανον*, "sickle," which gives a more obvious figure.

cask—flying abroad, a type of dishonest merchandise.[1] "This," says the Angel, "is their iniquity through all the land."[2] Then he saw a round plate of lead lifted up, and a woman was sitting upon it. This woman, said the angel, is wickedness. She is flung inside the ephah; its mouth is closed with the plate of lead; and then two women with wings like storks, and the wind in their wings, carry up the ephah and its contents into the air, and Zechariah is told by the angel that they are carrying it away to Babylon—the fit dwelling-place for unhallowed merchandise, from which the Holy Land must henceforth be free. In this double vision—the destruction of the sinners, the removal of the sin—some have seen a faint analogy to the symbolism of the two goats on the Day of Atonement, of which one was slain to atone for the sins of the people, while the other carried away their sins for Azazel into the wilderness. It implies the fulfilment of the promise in iii. 9, "I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day."

Seventh Vision.—*The Four Chariots* (vi. 1–8).

The avenging might of God.—This seventh vision, seen towards the morning, has some resemblance to the first, seen at the beginning of the night. From between the two mountains—perhaps the Temple-mountain and the Mount of Olives, which shine like brass as the ideal resting-place of God's strength—four chariots come bounding forth. The first is yoked with red horses, the second with black, the third with white, the fourth with horses spotted and strong. They are the four spirits of the heavens. The chariots yoked with the black and with the white horses sweep away into the north country, in token that death and defeat await the united powers of Persia and Babylon. The grisled horses rush towards the south to keep such kingdoms as Edom and Egypt and Ethiopia in check. The red horses, too, sought some work to do, but they are bidden at present to rush to and fro, waiting any mission that may send them to the east or to the west. Meanwhile the black horses have finished their task, and have appeased God's spirit in the north country.

[1] Comp. Amos viii. 5; Micah vi. 10.

[2] "Their iniquity" (A.V. "resemblance"). I adopt this reading (עונם) of the Septuagint and Peshito for the unintelligible reading "their eye" (עינם). If the latter be the right reading it can only mean "that to which they all look."

In reviewing these eight visions we see that the first—that of the horsemen among the myrtles—is meant to show that God's eye is upon the nations in spite of the apparent stillness; the second, of the four horses and the four smiths, to show that God would break the power of Israel's oppressors; the third, of the angel with the measuring line, to prophesy the enlargement and security of Jerusalem under the BRANCH; the fourth, to indicate the purification of the priesthood; the fifth, to represent the priestly and civil powers as channels of God's grace; the sixth, to shadow forth the curse of sinners and the cleansing of the land from sin; the seventh, to indicate God's judgments upon the nations.

1. *The crowning of the high priest* (vi. 9–15). Here end the visions, and the prophet begins another cycle of preaching by a symbolic act. Certain exiles had come from Babylon and brought with them gold and silver as gifts to the Temple. The prophet is to take this gold and silver to make crowns and place them on the head of Joshua the high priest,[1] and so visibly to present him as a type of THE BRANCH who should build to its full ideal perfection the Temple of the Lord, and be a Priest upon His throne. The crowns were to be a memorial for the exiles in the Temple; and strangers should come and build in the Temple, and it should be recognized that Zechariah was a true prophet—if they diligently obeyed the voice of God.

2. *The question about fasting* (vii., viii.). After the last symbolic act there was a pause in Zechariah's prophetic activity for two years. But on the fourth day of the ninth month Kisleu, in the fourth year of Darius (B.C. 518), the word of the Lord again came to him.

The occasion was remarkable. The people of Bethel sent two messengers—whose Assyrian names, Sharezer[2] and Regem-

[1] Ewald, followed by Hitzig and Wellhausen, corrects the reading, and adds, "on the head of Zerubbabel and on the head of Joshua." There is much to be said in favour of the correction, but Zerubbabel had no royal rights (Jer. xxii. 30), and in the absence of textual evidence it is perhaps unsafe to adopt it. The style, however, of the passage seems to point to some corruption of the text, and without this alteration it is difficult to explain "and there shall be peace between *them both*" in verse 13. The Heldai and Josiah of verse 9 appear as Helem, and Hen in verse 14. The Helem appears to be a slight clerical error; *Hen* should perhaps be rendered "kindness."

[2] It is the name of a son of Sennacherib (Isa. xxxvii. 38; comp. Jer.

Melech (Friend of the King), show traces of the Exile—to put to the priests and prophets a question about fasting. Many of the returning captives had settled at Bethel,[1] and they desired, in a ceremonial question, the advice of the religious authorities of Jerusalem. During the seventy years' captivity there had sprung up a custom of fasting on the tenth day of the fifth month Ab, on which the city and Temple had been burnt;[2] on the third day of the seventh month, in memory of the murder of Gedaliah;[3] on the ninth of the fourth month, in memory of the capture of Jerusalem;[4] and on the tenth day of the tenth month, which was the beginning of the blockade.[5] These fasts had continued all through the Captivity, and the people of Bethel wished to know whether, now that the building of the Temple was rapidly approaching its completion, they were still to fast on these days?

The fasts were of purely human ordinance, the memorials of national sorrow. In the Mosaic Law there was but one day's fast appointed in the year—that on the great Day of Atonement; nor is there a single uninterpolated word in Scripture to indicate the false and superstitious view that there is anything in fasting which is intrinsically pleasing to God. Zechariah does not therefore see fit to give any direct answer to their question. He has no word of God for them about these fasts, nor were they of sufficient importance to require any Divine direction. It was a question purely for themselves. God's commands had ever been few, simple, and moral. If they found that their fasts did them any good let them fast by all means for their own sakes,[6] but not with the silly and superstitious notion that their selfish eating or not eating was of the least consequence as any element in true religion (vers. 5, 6). In adopting this tone Zechariah follows the best moral teaching alike of the Old and New Testament. Again and again in both we are taught that God does *not* require stated fasts, but does always require us to be temperate in all things with a view to self-conquest, and above all else to be merciful, loving, and righteous.[7] The

xxxix. 3). For "When they had sent unto the house of God" (A. V.), the true rendering is, "Now they of Bethel had sent" (R. V.).

[1] Ezra ii. 28; Neh. vii. 32.

[2] Jer. lii. 12. In 2 Kings xxv. 8, the seventh day is mentioned. Later Jews fasted on the ninth.

[3] 2 Kings xxv. 25.

[4] Jer. xxxix. 2; lii. 6.

[5] 2 Kings xxv. 1.

[6] See even Jerome on Isa. lviii. 5.

[7] Isa. ii. 2, lxvi. 23; Jer. iii. 17.

lesson which runs through nearly all the prophets is the eternal nullity of the ceremonial, as compared with the moral, law. Zechariah tells them that their fasts during all those years had been as purely selfish as their feasts. Their fathers had been bidden to be compassionate and just, but they had made their hearts as adamant, and would not hear, and so had drawn down upon them the wrath of God. They were scattered with a whirlwind among the nations, and their land was made desolate (vii. 4–14). But now God's anger is turned away. Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord a holy mountain; and men and women there shall attain to great age, and the streets shall be full of boys and girls at play. From the East and the West the exiles shall be brought back, and Jehovah shall be their God. Therefore let the people listen to the prophets whom the Lord is now sending to them. For until the foundation of the Temple was laid there was nothing but poverty and affliction, but now there is a return of plenty, and the Jews who had been a curse among the nations should now become a blessing; for God's purpose of mercy should be fulfilled no less surely than had been His purpose of wrath (viii. 1–15).[1] Their duty therefore was plain. He does not bid them fast or not fast, but he bids them to be true and kind and faithful in their dealings with one another (vers. 16, 17). And if they would obey this command their fasts should become joy and gladness and cheerful feasts; and many nations would encourage each other to go to worship in Jerusalem, so that ten men of all nations should take hold of the skirt of a Jew and say, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (vers. 18–23). The chapter is remarkable for its emphasis of repetition, since the seven separate sayings at the beginning (vers. 2–17) and the three concluding paragraphs are all introduced by the solemn words, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts."

With that splendid promise the authentic treatise of Zechariah, the grandson of Iddo, appropriately ends. The violent contrast, the violent antipathy between the house of Judah and the heathen shall cease, and the eyes of the repentant nations shall look with yearning to Jerusalem as the centre of the religious world.

[1] The promise of viii. 4, 5, might almost seem to be expressly alluded to in 1 Macc. xiv. 4–15.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN ANONYMOUS PROPHET.

"ZECHARIAH" IX.–XI.

These chapters by an earlier prophet—Decisive proofs of this—Attempts to maintain the unity of the book—How the mistake arose—1. The triumph of Zion—i. The judgment on the heathen—ii. The holy King of Zion—iii. Promises of deliverance—2. Divine exaltation of Ephraim and Judah—3. Apostasy and judgment—Remarkable typology.

THESE three chapters are probably the work of some prophet whose name is no longer recoverable, but which have been appended to Zechariah by some accident or confusion of names. They, too, may have been by some one who bore the common name of Zechariah, but their whole style and purport shows that they could not have been written by the post-exile prophet whose utterances we have before us in the previous eight chapters. More than two centuries ago, influenced by the assignment of a prophecy in these chapters to *Jeremiah* in Matt. xxvii. 9, Mede (in 1638) ascribed them to that prophet, and was followed by Hammond, Kidder, Whiston, and others. In 1784 a Hamburg minister, named Flügge, in an anonymous work, proved that all the chapters in Zechariah after the eighth belong to a period before the Exile. In 1785 Bishop Newton stated the view which now prevails among the best critics that chapters ix–xi. belong to an epoch previous to the fall of the Northern Kingdom, and xii.–xiv. to some period after Josiah and before the destruction of Jerusalem. Roughly speaking, an increasing number of commentators are now convinced that ix.–xi. belong to the earlier part of the age of Isaiah, and xii.–xiv. to the age of Jeremiah.

The arguments against the unity of the entire book are irresistible. The style of the earlier and later portions of the book is so entirely different that even a casual reader of the English version can hardly help noticing it at a glance. The linguistic

peculiarities are different; the recurrent phrases are different; the historical standpoint throughout, and specially as regards the Temple and its ordinances, is different; the entire tone of the prophecy points to different moral conditions. The first part is full of visions, and is written in an ordinary and prosaic style; the second part has no visions, and is full of the force and fire and concise tremendous energy of older prophecy. The circle of thought is different. In the second part there is a complete absence of all trace of the angelology and other peculiarities of the first chapters. Above all, the political and national circumstances dealt with have no relation to those which existed in the days of Zerubbabel. In these chapters (ix.–xi.) Joshua, Zerubbabel, and their priestly and political successors have disappeared; the death of Josiah is still fresh in the memory (xii. 11), and the earthquake in the reign of Uzziah (xiv. 5), and perhaps the persecution in the days of Manasseh (xii. 10); there is no allusion to the enmity of Babylon, but to an entirely different set of enemies—the Syrians, Phœnicians, and Philistines; Assyria, Egypt, and Javan. Tyre and Sidon are still in the bloom of their prosperity; Gaza has still a king of her own; there has only been a partial commencement of any national captivity (x. 9); the Temple of Jerusalem is still standing (xi. 13); the Northern Kingdom not only still exists (xi. 14), but is still, to a certain extent, powerful (ix. 10, 13) and capable of increased power (x. 6, 7).[1] Lastly, the religious needs of the people are different, and are those which the prophets after the Exile cease to supply. The people have still to be warned against idolatry (x. 2), which after the Exile had no existence among the Jews. Even the aspects under which the Messiah is presented are not identical. In iii. 8, vi. 12, He is "the Branch"; in ix. 9, 10, the lowly conqueror; in xiv. 16, Jehovah Himself is the King.

Every indication of these chapters points to the fact that they must have been written by some younger contemporary

[1] The attempt to explain away the force of the allusions to "Ephraim" (ix. 13; x. 7, &c.), as though it were a *general* expression like Israel, are very unsuccessful. The name "Ephraim" is not used in the post-exilic prophets. Even Delitzsch says ("Messianic Prophecies," Eng. tr., p. 99), "Either everything has sprung from a præ-exilic situation, or we are surrounded with apocalyptic mysteries in emblematic images which are taken from præ-exilic circumstances."

of Hosea. The Northern Kingdom has not yet sunk to ruin, though imperilled by Assyrian incursions, and the population is in danger of being deported into Assyria and Egypt (x. 9, xi. 1). The days alluded to are those of Shallum, Menahem, and Pekah, and the anarchic condition which followed the death of Jeroboam II., during which the prophet himself seems to have assumed the political direction of at least a portion of the people, and to have endeavoured to unite Judah to Ephraim (xi. 4, 14).

Attempts have been made to weaken the force of this reasoning by picking out a phrase here and there, and by various arguments which too often look like special pleading. But nothing can alter the fact that if the three sections had not been collected into one book under one name—which furnishes no real evidence as to unity of authorship—no one could have dreamed of assigning them to the same person. The differences are fundamental, the resemblances, when not purely semblable, are only such as belong to all prophecy. By the method of proving identity of authorship on the authority of a few similar phrases "it would be easy to prove that the whole of the Old Testament had but one author." But although the writer has formed his own strong opinion he must not conceal that the question appears to present greater difficulty to other minds, and that De Wette, in the fourth edition of his Introduction, reverted to the view that the book was all written by a single author. But of those who still maintain this view some have to resort to the theory of interpolation, or to the precarious conjecture that in the later chapters "the author tried to conceal his own identity by adopting an archaic style, and making free use of more ancient prophecies."[1]

If it be asked how the mistake arose of attaching these chapters to the Book of Zechariah, the answer can only be conjectural. There is, however, no improbability in the conjecture of Strack, that the names of the writers had been forgotten, and that they had therefore been placed as anonymous writings at the end of the Book of Twelve Prophets before the addition of Malachi to the canon, and had afterwards been joined to Zechariah, perhaps because of one or two resemblances in expression, such as those in ii. 10, ix. 9; or possibly because

[1] So Delitzsch. Cheyne thinks that ix.–xiv. are from the same hand, but not by the author of i.–viii.

chapters ix.–xi. may have been written by the Zechariah mentioned in Isa. viii. 2.

Be that as it may, it is certain that these chapters belong to the most blooming period of Hebrew prophecy, and that their contents are memorable for power and insight.

1. THE TRIUMPH OF ZION OVER THE POWERS OF THE WORLD (ix.).

i. *The judgment upon her heathen neighbours* (ix. 1–8). "The oracle of the Word of the Lord over Hadrach, and Damascus is its resting-place—for the Lord hath an eye upon man and all the tribes of Israel—and Hamath also which bordereth thereby, Tyre and Sidon, wise though she be."[1] So the prophecy begins. About Hadrach nothing is known. Some take it for the name of a king or of a god, but it is probably the district Hatarika, which is mentioned with Damascus in a list of Assyrian conquests.[2] The "oracle" at once takes us back to the days of Israel's decadence, when Syria and Assyria and Phœnicia were sources of peril. After a threat that Tyre, in spite of her wisdom and wealth, shall be devoured with fire and smitten into the sea, there follows a denunciation of the Philistian Pentapolis—especially of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ashdod, and Ekron—whose pride shall be humiliated into complete disgrace and subjection, so that the king of Gaza shall be dethroned, and the half-breed Sheykh of Ashdod shall only count as a vassal of Judah, and Ekron shall be no higher than the Jebusites,[3] whereas God will be a rampart around His own house (ix., 1–8).

ii. *The holy King of Zion* (ix. 9–11). This strophe opens with the remarkable passage, quoted by St. Matthew and St. John, in which Zion is bidden to rejoice because her King is

[1] Comp. Ezek. xxviii. 4.

[2] For "the eye of man (Adam)" in verse 1 some read "the eye of Aram," but perhaps the clause should be rendered "the Lord hath an eye upon men."

[3] Some take *Jebusi* to mean Jerusalem, and read "he (the remnant of the Philistines) shall be, as Eleph (for *allûph*) in Judah; and Ekron as Jebusi," *i.e.*, shall become part of the Jewish people, though in an inferior capacity. A Benjamite city Eleph is mentioned in Josh. xviii. 28, just before "Jebusi, which is Jerusalem." The plea that these words are imitated from Zeph. ii. 4–7, and therefore that they are by a post-exilic prophet, cannot be maintained. The prophecies differ in a decisive point. Comp. Zeph. ii. 7 (Ashkelon).

coming to her, just and victorious, yet lowly, and riding upon an ass.[1] In His reign the chariot shall be no longer needed in Ephraim, nor the war-horse in Jerusalem.

Although the sphere of the prophet's work is mainly in the kingdom of Israel, yet his sympathies seem to be centred in Judah, and, like Amos, he may have been of Judean birth. All his hopes are fixed on the royal house of Jerusalem, to which he looks for the meek and glorious Deliverer, whom he foretells as clearly as Isaiah and Micah, and in less general terms than Amos and Hosea. His rule is to be a rule of peace and blessedness, not of battle and tumult (ix. 10), though it shall extend from sea to sea, and from Euphrates to the ends of the earth (Psa. lxxii. 8, 11, 19); and in faithfulness to His old covenant with Israel (Exod. xxiv. 3 ff), which was ratified with blood, God would deliver from the waterless cistern of captivity the prisoners who had been taken by enemies in war.[2]

iii. *Promises of deliverance and glory to Israel* (ix. 12–17). In this splendid strophe Jehovah promises to go forth, leading His people to the victory of peace and blessing. They shall subdue their enemies, trampling upon the sling-stones hurled against them,[3] and they shall be as a crown of jewels glittering over this land. Javan is mentioned (ver. 13) as the chief foe over whom they shall triumph, and seems to mean no more than the western regions to which the farthest prisoners of war had been sold.[4] To bring down the date of the poem to the third century before Christ (the Grecian epoch) in virtue of this single expression is altogether extravagant.

2. THE DIVINE EXALTATION OF EPHRAIM AND JUDAH (x.).

The tenor of this entire strophe is glad and hopeful, yet it is mingled with memories of judgment, in consequence of the idolatry and divinations of past days[5] (vers. 1–3). It contains the promise to Judah: "Out of him shall come the corner-stone; out of him the staple; out of him the battle-bow; out of him every governor together."[6] Yet the prophet foresees an extension of captivity as a necessary discipline of faithfulness to God (ver. 9). The Jews shall be restored to their own land before the final judgment upon Egypt and Assyria (vers. 11, 12).

[1] See Matt. xxi. 5; comp. xii. 15–20. [2] Obad. 20.

[3] Ver. 15. Compare Job xli. 28, "sling-stones are turned with him into stubble." [4] Comp. Joel iii. 6; Isa. lxvi. 19.

[5] In x. 2 for "idols" read "*teraphim*." [6] Comp. Jer. xxx. 21.

3. APOSTASY AND JUDGMENT (xi.).

In the first strophe (ix.) the prophet has gazed from the heights upon the days of far future glory; in the second (x.) he has revealed his consciousness that days of trouble must precede the days of deliverance; in the third strophe (xi.) he has only the present before him, in all its abjectness and ingratitude.

The chapter is marked by singular energy, but we cannot tell with certainty whether the events on which it touches are all directly historical, or whether they are thrown into an ideal form. Some terrible invasion from the north is imminent. The prophet calls on Lebanon and its cedars, and on the oaks of Bashan to cry aloud, for fire and ruin are at hand. There is a wail of shepherds from devastated fields, a howling of young lions from the wasted thickets of Jordan (vers. 1–3).[1]

Amid the misery and desolation, Jehovah bids the prophet himself to assume the duties of a shepherd over this flock doomed to slaughter, whose shepherds have shown themselves careless and greedy. Therefore these dwellers in the land—these lordly and cruel owners of the flock—shall be handed over to the oppression of their king and mutual destruction.[2] But the prophet feeds the poor, miserable flock, and, to indicate his twofold purpose towards them, he makes two staves. To one he gives the name of "Graciousness," to imply a covenant of peace between the sheep and the surrounding nations; and the other he calls "Union,"[3] because he desires to re-unite the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel into brotherhood.[4]

But the period of his guidance of the flock was brief and stormy. Three other shepherds—three kings who claimed the rule of the flock—rose, and were swept away in a month; but, on the other hand, his flock grew weary of his rule. Then, in indignation, he threw up his office. Let the sheep die; let them be cut off; let them devour one another![5] In sign that he was their shepherd no longer, he practically abandons them to

[1] There is no obvious explanation of this terrible invasion from the north if it does not refer to the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings xv. 29; 1 Chron. v. 26). But if so, these chapters could not have been written by a post-exilic prophet.

[2] The necessity of providing tribute-money for Assyria, or means to defend the Northern Kingdom against her, must have crushed the Ephraimites to the end. See 2 Kings xv. 20.

[3] Lit., "Binders," *marg.*

[4] Comp. Ezek. xxxiv., xxxvii. 16–22, which seem to contain reminiscences of this chapter.

[5] Comp. Jer. xv. 1, 2; Isa. ix. 20.

their heathen enemies by breaking the staff "Graciousness"; and, in the results which followed—perhaps in the subsequent invasion of the Assyrian King Pul or Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xv. 19)—those who attended to his words recognized that they were the word of the Lord.

But since he thought it well to require from the people some overt acknowledgment of the position which he had occupied towards them, he offered them their choice of paying him or refusing to pay him, as they thought best, the reward of his labour. They scornfully paid him the sum of thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave (Exod. xxi. 32). It was an act of infinite contumely; and, by the direction of Jehovah, he, with no less scorn, cast it to the potter—if that be the right reading—but, perhaps, to the treasurer or the Temple treasury,[1] if we follow the slight alteration adopted by the Targum and by some editors—as a witness of their insolent rejection of him, a prophet of the Lord. The deeply typical character of the whole narrative is brought out in the reference of St. Matthew (xxvii. 10), as finding its supreme fulfilment in the conduct of the traitor Judas towards his Lord.

Then, since all brotherhood between Judah and Israel had become hopeless, he broke his other staff, "Union." He is next bidden to take the instruments of a foolish (or wicked) shepherd—a staff perhaps—which is assumed in mockery only. For Jehovah intends to raise up over the rebellious and abandoned flock a shepherd of the worst type—indolent, indifferent, greedy, cruel. Woe to him! May the sword of the foe smite his right arm, and pierce his right eye![2]

Such is the remarkable chapter in which all the immediate hopes of the prophet seem to be swallowed up in turmoil and darkness, in the midst of which he does not even recur to the glorious promises which he has just held forth. The historical circumstances to which he alludes are only partially known to us. Was it really the case that, amid the anarchy which followed the death of Jeroboam II., some leading prophet assumed the headship of the mass of the people? If so, it is strange that no trace of his action should have been left even

[1] Mal. iii. 10.

[2] Ewald has suggested with some probability that the passage now found in xiii. 7–9 (where it seems out of place), beginning, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd," belongs to the end of this chapter.

in the meagre annals of the Northern Kingdom, and that no allusion to his patriotic efforts to unite the two branches of the House of Israel should be preserved in the fuller records of the kingdom of Judah. If two of the false shepherds who were cut off in the course of one month were Zechariah the son of Jeroboam, and Shallum[1],—who was the third? It cannot be Menahem, for he reigned ten years. Is it, then, some unnamed pretender? And was the contumelious payment for the prophet's services a real or an imaginary act? We cannot answer these questions with certainty, nor can we be sure whether the worthless shepherd of the closing words was Menahem or Pekah. Hitzig renders it, "I removed the three shepherds which were in one month," which is a possible construction. The reference would then be to Zechariah, Shallum, and Menahem. Any historical uncertainty of this kind is nothing to the extravagant suppositions that these chapters are by the author of the first eight. They resort to such expedients as making "one month" mean thirty years, or two hundred and thirty years, and so they reduce the whole exegesis to arbitrary chaos.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of interpreting the details does not detract from our sense of the extraordinary energy and force of the prophetic narrative, which acquires yet deeper interest from the quotation of it in Matt. xxvii. 9. The character of the reference is not materially altered whether we adopt the reading, "to the potter" (LXX. *εἰς τὸ χωνευτήριον*) as though the money were to be turned to the ignoble purpose of making common earthen vessels, or (as in the Syriac), "to the temple treasury" (*τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον*, Mark xii. 41). The point of the adaptation lies in the fact that the glorious prophet whom God had raised up to reunite the severed House of Jacob, and to save it from surrounding heathen powers, was so completely rejected and despised that his work was regarded as worth no more than the lowest price of a slave; and that this vile sum was flung by him into the Temple. This unknown prophet thus became a type of that Good Shepherd whom God had sent to His people, but whose brief and rejected ministry was followed by betrayal, and who was also sold for thirty pieces of silver.

[1] 2 Kings xv. 8-13.

CHAPTER XX.

"ZECHARIAH" XII–XIV.

A third prophet—Peculiarities of his prophecy—Political circumstances of the time—The attitude of Judah to Jerusalem—I. The great deliverance—i. God's judgments on the heathen—ii. The repentance of Jerusalem—iii. The purification from guilt—II. Judgment and final glory—i. The day of the Lord—ii. Partial deliverance—iii. Judgment on enemies—iv. The Messianic kingdom.

INTERNAL evidence makes it almost certain that we are here face to face with yet another prophet, and one who lived neither like the contemporary of Haggai in the period after the Exile, nor yet, like the author of the last three chapters, in the anarchic close of the history of the Northern Kingdom, but a little after Habakkuk, and shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.[1] According to our present text he calls his prophecy "The oracle of the word of the Lord concerning Israel"; but since he is solely occupied with Judah and Jerusalem it is clear that Israel is here only a general name for the Southern Kingdom. It is indeed probable that the true reading is not "Israel" but "Jerusalem," by the same clerical error which we also perhaps find in Jer. xxiii. 6 (where the parallel passage, Jer. xxiii. 16, seems to show that "Jerusalem" is the true reading) and in Zeph. iii. 14, where as here we find Jerusalem in the Septuagint.

The prophet writes under the pressure of some impending calamity. He anticipates with certainty that Jerusalem will not only be besieged but will endure all the horrors of sack and shame (xiv. 2). His attitude under these depressing circumstances is that of an undaunted patriot. In his earlier strophes he hurls defiance at the foes of Judah and Jerusalem, and even when he can neither resist nor conceal the conviction that Jerusalem must fall he does not preach quietness and sub-

[1] See, however, Ewald, "History of Israel," iv. 271.

mission as Jeremiah did within the walls of Jerusalem, but prophesies, at least for the residue—at least for one-third—of the people (xiii. 8, xiv. 2) a deliverance and a blessed restoration, though not until they also have passed through the refining fire of terrible calamity (xiii. 9). Possibly the deeper dejection and less hopeful attitude of Jeremiah may have been due to his more intimate knowledge of the guilt and resourcelessness of the capital; whereas this prophet, who apparently lived outside the walls, is greatly occupied with the people of Judah, and was able to fix his attention more exclusively on the ultimate destruction of the foes of the Holy People which Isaiah and elder prophets had proclaimed. He cannot, indeed, and does not anticipate so superb an interposition of Jehovah's mercy as that which had delivered the Holy City from the Assyrians in the days of Hezekiah. He sees plainly that Jerusalem cannot keep back the Babylonians from entering her walls, and subjecting her to the worst evils of humiliation and rapine; but he believes in a mighty and marvellous manifestation of God's power which shall inaugurate the days of Messianic blessing.

Ewald, followed by some more recent critics, thinks that the immediate event which kindled the prophetic activity of this unknown writer was the terrible danger lest the people of Judah,—chiefly under compulsion from the Chaldeans, but perhaps not wholly uninfluenced by that bitter jealousy against the capital city of which there is a possible trace in xii. 7—should fight against Jerusalem, and help to destroy it. This opinion is founded on xii. 2, which is so rendered in the Targum and the Vulgate as to mean that "Judah also shall be at the besieging of Jerusalem." This view is supported by xiv. 14, if that be rendered (as in the R.V. and margin of our A.V.), "And Judah also shall fight *against* Jerusalem." We read in 2 Kings xxiv. 2, that in the closing days of the kingdom, in the reign of Jehoiakim, God sent against him "bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it." If these passages of the anonymous prophet are rightly understood by the Targum we are driven to the sad conclusion that the Judeans of the country took part in the destruction of their own capital and Temple. If so, the mere possibility of such a catastrophe might well make the heart of a Judean prophet burn within him; but unfortunately the meaning of

the passage is not clear. In xii. 2, the meaning may only be "I will make Jerusalem a cup of staggering unto all peoples, and upon Judah also shall it be at the siege of Jerusalem," *i.e.*, the anguish and bewilderment shall fall upon Judah also in that revival of deadly animosities of nation against nation during the siege. Similarly xiv. 14 may only imply that "Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem," while the remainder of the verse would then imply that Judah would share with Jerusalem the rich spoil abandoned by the panic of the discomfited nations. The literal rendering and some of the allusions seem, however, to point to the view that Judah, whether willingly or compulsorily, did contribute soldiers for the besieging of Jerusalem.

The general subject of these three chapters of prophecy is the future deliverance and blessing of Judah and Jerusalem. The third chapter (xiv.) seems to have been written at a later time when affairs had grown more desperate, and only the darkest anticipations are possible for the immediate future, though a Divine hope could still look through the intervening darkness to the great light beyond.

I. THE GREAT DELIVERANCE AND THE BETTER AGE (xii. 1–xiii. 9).

i. *God's judgments on the heathen* (xii. 1–9). After speaking of God as the Almighty Creator of the world and of man (1), the prophet compares Jerusalem to a goblet of wine which the nations eagerly seize, but which becomes to them a cup that makes them stagger like drunken men,[1] and from which Judah also must suffer (2). He compares her also to a lifting-stone, used in games of strength, at which the nations try their hands but only wound themselves in vain, and do not succeed in hurling it away (3). In that day will Jehovah smite the heathen powers—the horses and their riders—with stupefaction, confusion, and blindness; and the chiefs of Judah shall have their eyes opened so that instead of being jealous of Jerusalem they shall recognize in her their chief source of strength through the Lord of Hosts their God (5, 6).

Kindled into enthusiastic courage by this conviction they shall become like a brazier of fire amid the wood, like a torch of fire among the sheaves, to consume the surrounding peoples (6), so that Judah shall *first* be saved—in order to prevent

[1] Compare Psa. xi. 6, Hab. ii. 15, 16.

the people of Jerusalem from glorifying themselves at the expense of their country neighbours; and then the dwellers in the Holy City, so that even their feeble ones should be strong as David,[1] while the sons of David's own royal house shall be as the Angel of Jehovah (7, 8).[2]

ii. *The repentance of Jerusalem* (xii. 9–14). But before that day of the destruction of the foes of Jerusalem, Jehovah will pour upon David's house and upon Jerusalem the spirit of grace and prayer to enable them to repent of a great crime. They have murdered some martyr-prophet of the Lord, and touched by Divine grace *they shall look on him whom they pierced.*[3] If the reading "*me*" be adopted the sense of "whom they have *pierced*" cannot be weakened, as is done by Theodore of Mopsuestia and Calvin, to mean "whom they have *vexed*," but must be taken to imply the truth that God is wounded in the person of His servants. But now the people of Jerusalem shall repent for this their crime in a mourning as bitter as that with which they all bewailed the death of Josiah at Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddo (B.C. 609).[4] Each family should bewail it separately—the House of David and the branch of Nathan,[5] the families of Levi and of Shimei[6] (xii. 10–14).

Who was this martyr whose murder has been so great a crime, whose memory should awaken so bitter and universal a repentance? We are naturally tempted to suppose that it is the suffering servant of Jehovah so pathetically depicted in Isaiah liii. It was clearly some great shepherd of the people, who was near and dear to God (xiii. 7), in whose death the House of David, as well as the people of the city, had taken a

[1] Psa. xviii. 32; ciii. 20. [2] Exod. xxxiii. 2; Isa. lxiii. 9).

[3] Another reading followed by the A. V. and the R. V. is "they shall look on *me* whom they pierced"; but many MSS., by a very slight change, read "*him.*" There is an obvious propriety in this reading; for it would be little in accordance with the awful reverence which pervades the Old Testament to represent the nation as bitterly lamenting over Jehovah (who is here the speaker) as having been murdered by them. On the other hand, the Septuagint, Vulgate, Peshito, and the Targum all read "me," though from John xix. 37, Rev. i. 7, we might infer that "him" was the common reading at the beginning of the Christian era.

[4] 2 Chron. xxxv. 20–27; 2 Kings xxiii. 29, 30. In Jerome's time it was called Maximianopolis. [5] 2 Sam. v. 14; Luke iii. 31.

[6] Shimei, son of Levi, Num. iii. 17; not the Benjamite of 2 Sam. xvi. 5.

shameful part (xii. 10–12; xiii. 1). Was it Isaiah himself slain by Manasseh, as tradition tells us? Was it the Prophet Urijah murdered by Jehoiakim and his people? (Jer. xxvi. 20–23.) Or was it some other prophet, like Jeremiah, who suffered so many years of cruel persecution, which pointed to his future martyrdom? We cannot tell, but whoever he was, his murder, and the subsequent agony of repentance which that murder awoke among those who pierced him, was a striking type and foreshadowing of the death of the King of Martyrs, the Son of God, and of the remorse which pierced to the heart those who had slain Him (Acts ii. 37; vii. 54).

iii. *The purification from guilt and falsity* (xiii. 1–9). But repentance ensures forgiveness. For the penitent members of the royal house and the guilty city a fountain shall be opened for sin and uncleanness, which shall wash away these stains of innocent blood (xiii. 1); and the result of this purification shall be the uprooting of idolatry and false prophecy. Hitherto the false prophets, in the hairy mantles which they wore after the fashion of Elijah, in order to deceive, have been honoured and rewarded; now their trade shall become so much execrated that parents themselves shall slay any son who attempts to take it up (3), and those who have once practised it shall be most eager to disclaim it. If in former days they have gashed themselves on the breast[1] in sign of sacred frenzy, like other false prophets, they shall now be anxious to explain the wounds away (5, 6). Meanwhile, however, some martyr-king or martyr-prophet—the shepherd of his people—must be slain, and the sheep be scattered (7), but a third part shall be saved as by fire, and be the people of Jehovah (7–9). The words, "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered" (verse 7), like so many in this book, are applied to Christ by the Evangelists.[2] Unhappily we cannot explain with certainty the primary and contemporary allusion. It must also be admitted that the strophe of verses 7–9 comes in rather abruptly and awkwardly. The difficulty of explaining the connection has led some to suppose again that this is a brief prophetic fragment preserved from older times by its own force and beauty. This is the view of Ewald, but it is not supported by decisive evidence.

2. JUDGMENT AND FINAL MESSIANIC GLORY (xiv.).

[1] xiii. 6. Not "*in* thine hands," but "*between* thy hands." Compare 2 Kings ix. 24.

[2] Matt. xxvi. 31; Mark xiv. 27.

The second part of this prophecy occupies the fourteenth chapter, and consists of four strophes. At the beginning of the prophecy (xii. 1–9) it might have seemed as if an inviolable security were promised to Jerusalem in spite of the threatening movements of nations flocking to her destruction. Such a hope is no longer possible. Jerusalem cannot now be delivered from Nebuchadnezzar, as she had been delivered from Sennacherib. Yet the deliverance shall come, and shall be mighty, though it shall only save the residue of the people.

i. *The day of the Lord* (xiv. 1–3). Jerusalem must fall, and be spoiled, and half of her inhabitants must go into captivity, but Jehovah shall save the remnant and fight for them against the heathen (1–3).

ii. *Partial deliverance and future light and purification* (xiv. 4–11). Jehovah shall descend upon the Mount of Olives, which shall be cleft asunder into a deep valley, and through this ravine, which shall reach unto Azel,[1] shall many flee in a wild panic like that at the terrible earthquake in the days of King Uzziah.[2] In that day there shall not be light, but cold and ice; but at evening time it shall be light (4–7). And in that day living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, summer and winter, to the eastern and western seas.[3] Jehovah will be the universal King; and from Geba in the north of Judah to Rimmon in the south the whole land shall be a plain in which Jerusalem shall be exalted, and secure, and free from curse (8–11).

iii. *Judgment on the enemies* (xiv. 12–15). They that make war upon Jerusalem shall be smitten with a plague of rottenness (12), and with a panic which shall drive them to mutual destruction (12, 13), and Judah and Jerusalem shall divide the rich spoil which they leave behind them (14) and the war-animals and cattle of their camp shall be smitten with the same consuming stroke.[4]

iv. *The Messianic kingdom* (xiv. 16–21). The consequence of this judgment on heathen foes, and of the purification of the

[1] The allusion is highly uncertain, and another reading, adopted by the Targum, LXX., &c., gives the sense, "and the valley of my mountains shall be stopped" (R. V., *marg.*). Others render the word Azel "very high." If *a place* is intended it may be the Beth-Ezel of Mic. i. 11.

[2] Amos i. 1. [3] Ezek. xlviii.; Joel iii. 18.

[4] In the manner of the deliverance there are obvious reminiscences of Isa. xxxvii. 36; Judg. vii. 22; 2 Chron. xx. 23. (Comp. Ezek. xxxviii. 21.)

Holy City shall be that all the opposing nations shall acknowledge Jehovah, and go up to worship Him at the annual Feast of Tabernacles. If any refuse to do this no rain shall fall on them; and if this be but a matter of small punishment to the Egyptians,[x] they and all who refuse to keep the feast shall be smitten with plague. And so widely spread shall be this worship that even on the bells of the horses, as on the high priest's mitre, shall be engraven "Holiness to the Lord"; and every common earthen vessel in Jerusalem shall have a sacredness like that of the vessels of the sanctuary; and all who come to sacrifice shall use them as holy vessels, and there shall be no more any Canaanite (or "trafficker") in the house of the Lord of Hosts.

It will be observed that all this language is only capable of figurative and typical explanation; otherwise it does not correspond to any facts of history.

[x] But the words rendered "that have no rain," in xiv. 18, are probably corrupt, and may mean (omitting the negative) "then shall fall on them the plague."

CHAPTER XXI.

MALACHI.

The name Malachi—Date of the prophet—Condition of contemporary society—Deeply seated evils—Germs of ultimate Judaism—Style of Malachi—Outline of the book—I. Sins of the priests—i. Introductory statement—ii. Ingratitude of the priests—II. Sins of the people—Heathen marriages and divorces—i. Defiance—ii. Warning—iii. Distrust—iv. The day of the Lord.

THE name Malachi means "my messenger" or "my angel." It is a name which occurs nowhere else in the Old or New Testament, and has consequently led to the absurd conjecture that Malachi was an incarnate angel, a conjecture which in early days some extended to Haggai also (see Hag. i. 13). The Septuagint translators render Mal. i. 1, "The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of His angel."[1] If Malachi were the real name of the writer he perhaps makes a passing allusion to it in iii. 1, "Behold I send you *My messenger*."[2] Possibly, however, the real name of the prophet was forgotten, or purposely withheld, and then the suggestion of the name "Malachi" may have come from this verse. The Targum of Jonathan and many Rabbis, followed by Hengstenberg, suppose that Ezra was the author;[3] but the authorship of so celebrated and influential a man as "the second Moses" would certainly have been remembered. All that we can say is that Malachi was either the actual name of this prophet, probably abbreviated from Malachyahu, or a name which he earned by his ministrations, and which became current among the people. Of his life no single fact is recorded, but we may infer from the book itself

[1] Reading, perhaps, *Malacho*. In 2 Esdras i. 39–40 we find "and Malachy, which is called also an angel of the Lord." Pseudo-Epiphanius makes him a Levite of Zebulun, born at Sofira.

[2] Comp. Hag. i. 13; Isa. xliv. 26.

[3] Comp. Ezra ix. 4, 14, 15 with Mal. iii. 6, 16. So, too, St. Jerome, "Malachi autem Hebraei Ezram destimant sacerdotem."

that he was a priest, or had close relations with the priesthood. It is no more astonishing that he should be "a name and nothing more" than that a similar fate should have befallen the many sweet psalmists who sang during and after the Captivity.

There is no doubt that he wrote in the period after the Exile, and perhaps a century later than Haggai and Zechariah—in which case we observe that the Minor Prophets from Amos to Malachi cover a period of four centuries—nearly equal to that from Chaucer to Wordsworth.

Malachi has been called "the Seal," because his book closes the canon of the Old Testament. The indications of his book point to the days of Nehemiah. Ezra had returned with his band of exiles B.C. 458, Nehemiah returned B.C. 445. The marriages with the heathen, which caused such anguish to the heart of Nehemiah (Neh. xiii. 23–28),[1] also form one of the subjects of Malachi's reproofs (ii. 11–13). The main complaint of the prophet is against the priests for their slackness and niggardliness in connection with the Temple offerings. This would not accord with the outburst of passing zeal which marked the renewal of the covenant recorded in Neh. x. 28–39; nor is it likely that Nehemiah, a governor conspicuous for his generosity, was in the habit of receiving presents from the people like the governor alluded to in Mal. i. 8. It has therefore been assumed with much probability that the period of Malachi's activity occurred during the twelve years' absence of Nehemiah at the Court of Artaxerxes. The governor himself narrates to us (xiii. 6 ff.) the many abuses which sprung up during his absence (B.C. 433–424). In B.C. 424 Artaxerxes died, and the return of Nehemiah to his office led to strenuous measures of reformation which perhaps put an end to the laxity and godlessness which called forth this last flush in the sunset of Hebrew prophecy.[2]

Malachi's denunciations will set before us the deep-seated evils of the days in which his lot was cast. It is interesting to trace in him the gradual growth of a new order of polity and a new tone of thought among the exiles who had returned to their rebuilt but humbled and impoverished city. The Exile itself had already vanished into the distant past, and is not here alluded to. The Temple had been completed. "The priests,"

[1] Ezra ix. 1, 2; x. 17.

[2] Malachi was contemporary with the first part of the first Peloponnesian War. The thirty years' truce began B.C. 445.

says Ewald, "not only possessed the preponderating authority with regard to it, but had thereby acquired a kind of arrogance and covetousness which continued to develop itself increasingly in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, and ended in the establishment of a fully-developed hierarchy" (i. 6; ii. 9; iii. 3–4). There was tolerable order and repose, but the lofty enthusiasm kindled by the first return of the exiles had passed away amid the weakness of their circumstances. The realisation of the splendid Messianic hopes, on which so many of the prophets had dwelt, and of which the fulfilment had been eagerly anticipated as a reward for the present scrupulosity of adherence to the Mosaic law, seemed to have receded into the distance. This delay of the promises had caused on the one hand a querulous dislike of religious services, and on the other an arrogant repudiation of them altogether. Already we see in Malachi the germs of Pharisaism which relied on mere external ordinances; of the Sadduceeism, which minimised the elements of religious faith; and of the open worldliness which cared for nothing but the greed and the lusts of the present life. But the saddest sign of all was the degeneracy of the priesthood which Malachi, though perhaps himself a priest, was specially commissioned to denounce. The lack of all real faith and moral soundness in the very order which ought to have kept alive among the people the essential elements of the spiritual life, was eating like a cancer into the heart of the national sincerity. Unhappily it was developed more and more during the succeeding centuries till in the hour of visitation the priests, headed by their chief priests, stood forth pre-eminent in the guilt of Judah's crowning crime, the murder of the Lord of glory in the supposed interests of the religious hierarchy.

The style of Malachi differs from that of the great prophets. It has scarcely a trace of the poetic and rhetorical passion which throbs through their vehement pages. It is pure and polished but essentially prosaic, and it introduces the new literary machinery of repeated question and answer, a dialectic form of writing which is not without a certain charm of its own, but which opened such facilities for imitation that it became very frequent in the literature of later Judaism.

Ewald divides the book with reference to the three views of God which it sets forth as the Father and Lord of His people (i. 2–ii. 9), as the only God and Father (ii. 10–16), and as the

unchangeably righteous and final Judge (ii. 17–iv. 6). His treatment of the Minor Prophets is so able and so full of insight that it is always well to observe his suggestions. But we may perhaps divide the book more simply. After the brief introduction on the love of God for Judah (i. 2–5), it falls into the three sections or mainly occupied with—1. Denunciation of the sins of the priests (i. 6–ii. 9). 2. Denunciation of the sins of the people (ii. 10–iii. 15). 3. Prophecy of the Day of the Lord, and its forerunner.

I. SINS OF THE PRIESTS.

i. *Introductory statement* (i. 2–5).—After the brief title (i. 1) the book opens with the emphatic utterance, "I have loved you, saith the Lord," and then, falling into the dialectic method of which the writer was so fond, it continues, "Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" and proceeds to give the proof of this love by contrasting the fortunes of the two kindred peoples—Edom and Israel. Over the border of Israel the Lord is great (i. 5), whereas Edom lies in utter ruin. The description evidently points to a recent catastrophe, and is another incidental proof of the overthrow of Edom by her own false and contemptuous allies the Chaldeans, of which we have read the prophecy in Obadiah (i. 7). Edom might struggle to recover her old position, but what she might build Jehovah would throw down, and she should be known as "the border of wickedness," or, as Isaiah calls her, "the people of the ban."

ii. *Ingratitude of the priests for the love of God.*—If, then, God be a Father to Israel, where is the honour and fear which is His due? The priests have despised His name. If they ask "How?" the answer is that they despise the table of the Lord and offer polluted bread upon His altar,[1] and bring blind and sick and lame victims for sacrifice, such as even their earthly governor would refuse with indignation. How could God be pleased with their ministrations? Better no worship at all than a worship so selfish and insulting. Would that one of them would shut the doors of the Temple altogether rather than that God should be dishonoured by Jewish priests at the very time that, among the heathen, His name is feared and honoured, and to the eye of prophecy incense and a pure offering—the acceptable sacrifices of prayer and love—are offered from the

[1] The shewbread was not offered on the altar. The word "bread" here means "flesh" or "food" (comp. Lev. iii. 11, 16).

rising to the setting sun (i. 6–11).[1] Is this, then, the time for the priests to be treating God's worship as a weariness and a thing to be despised, and (in defiance of the covenant so recently made, Neh. x. 28–39) to be violating their sacred vows and cheating Jehovah of their promised offerings? (i. 12–14). Unless they repent God will send His curse upon them. Yea! He has sent it already, and the terrible fruits of it are already visible, and shall be yet more so (ii. 1–3),[2] because the priests have broken the sacred covenant to which, in old days, the House of Levi was faithful (ii. 4–7).[3] Nothing but shame could fall on them for such misconduct (ii. 8, 9). The ideal priest is here characterized, not by ceremonial exactitude but by moral integrity.

II. THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE (ii. 10–iii. 15).

God is the Father of the nation; why, then, do the people deal treacherously with each other by profaning the covenant of their fathers? For the marriages with heathen women are a profanation of the covenant which God will punish (ii. 10–12).[4] And they were guilty of a further offence of which the consequence was that women came weeping and wailing to the altar of Jehovah and covering it with their tears.[5] For they were

[1] In i. 11 the participles may be either rendered by presents or futures. If the former we must suppose that Malachi alludes to the better side of heathen worship. If the latter, we must see in them a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles. It is as absurd to quote this verse as a plea for the use of incense in churches as it would be to quote Zech. xiv. 16–21 as a proof that we ought to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. The Council of Trent, following many of the Fathers, applies "a pure offering" to the Eucharist.

[2] The Rev. S. Cox points out ("Bible Educator," iii. 35) an interesting allusion of Malachi's in ii. 2 to the passages which Nehemiah had heard from the law, and which led to his reformation of the heathen marriages (Neh. xiii. 1–3).

[3] The reference is *specially* to the faithfulness of Phinehas and Levi recorded in Numb. xxv. 6–15.

[4] "The Lord will cut off . . . the *master and the scholar*." These are literally, as in R.V., "him that waketh and him that answereth," *i.e.*, the watchman of the city and the inhabitants. In the Arabic life of Tamerlane s a clause, "When he left the city there was not a *crier or an answerer* in it," *i.e.*, all were massacred.

[5] The meaning and connexion are uncertain. This is one of several most obscure passages in this latest of the prophets. Some interpret the verse as a *threat* of the misery which *shall* yet come upon the priests.

guilty of practising divorce on slight pretexts, and of dealing treacherously against the wives of their youth. No one acted thus who had even a residue of God's spirit. If they ask, "What did the ancient founder of their race (Abraham) do when he dismissed Hagar?" the answer is that his one great object was to secure a holy seed.[1] But God hates divorce, and he who without cause puts his wife away, covers his garment with violence, *i.e.*, stands before the world as an outrageous transgressor.[2] Therefore let them take heed (ii. 13–16).

i. *Defiance.*—But so far from taking heed, some (as the prophet shows in three separate scenes) were indulging in insolent defiance either by denying moral obligations altogether, or by doubting that God would judge (ii. 17). Sternly should their eyes be opened! They murmured that the wicked were prosperous, but *they themselves* were wicked. God would send His messenger, the Angel of His covenant, the manifestation of Himself, suddenly to His Temple, and He would purge the sons of Levi with refining fire till their offerings were pleasant as in the days of old. He be a swift witness against the sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers, oppressors, and insolent. "For I am JEHOVAH. I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob, ye are not consumed"[3] (ii. 17–iii. 6).

Others again think that this and the following verses refer to the cruel and hasty divorce of wives of foreign race from false motives and on insufficient grounds. But if so it comes in abruptly after a warning against mixed marriages. The wailing women are perhaps *Jewish* wives divorced to form idolatrous connexions.

[1] Such seems to be the meaning of this most difficult passage. See Gen. xxi. 12. It is a partial excuse for the extraordinary rigour of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the religious teachers of the returned exiles, who took a far more severe view of these mixed marriages than had ever been taken in earlier days. Joseph had married an Egyptian, Moses himself was married to an Ethiopian woman, and some of the judges and kings of Israel, as well as Abraham, had married heathen women without reproof. The reformers no doubt appealed to Exod. xxxiv. 16, Deut. vii. 4, and to the altered necessities of the times and of the covenant. As regards divorce, which had been permitted in Deut. xxiv. 1, the energetic language of Malachi, "The Lord, the God of Israel, saith I hate divorce," anticipates the judgment of our Lord (Matt. xix. 8).

[2] So v. Orelli, Ewald, Schulten, Gesenius. Hitzig, pressing too far an Arabic analogy, makes "his garment" mean "his wife." The Koran says, "Wives are *your attire* and ye are theirs."

[3] The meaning of this last clause is uncertain. Ewald renders it, "But

ii. *Warnings.*—How little were they prepared for the coming Judge! Their transgressions have continued even from the days of their fathers. Return unto Me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts. Do they ask what special amendment God requires? Let them rob Him no longer as the whole nation has done, in tithes and offerings. Their harvests are now locust-eaten, their vineyards blighted; but if they would return to their duty, God would open for them the windows of heaven, and all nations should call them happy (iii. 7–12).

iii. *Distrust.*—Let them then repent for one more sin—that of querulous distrust. Serving God with outward ordinances in the spirit of hirelings, they had expected that He would at once reward them for their small Levitic scupulosities and outward humiliations.[1] And because these cheap things did not at once meet with an overflowing reward they blasphemously envied the happiness of those who altogether set God at naught (iii. 13–15).

But not so all of them. Some there were whose words of pious trust and mutual encouragement had been recorded in God's book of remembrance, and they should be as jewels in His treasure-house, and then all the murmurers should see the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not (iii. 16–18).[2]

iv. *The day of the Lord* (iv.).—The prophet concludes with a few last words of admonition and blessing. The day of the Lord is at hand. It shall utterly consume the wicked. But upon those who fear God the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings (iv. 1–3). Let them then remember the Law of Moses (4), for before the great and dreadful day of the Lord He would send them Elijah the prophet.[3] He would

ye sons of Jacob, have ye not altered?" But comp. Ezra ix. 14, 15. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," and the sons of Israel were, after all, sons of the covenant.

[1] The passage is an early trace of the development of Pharisaism.

[2] Mr. Cox points out that though Malachi gives us specimens of the murmurs of the sceptics, he gives none of the mutual communings of those who feared Jehovah. These, however, may be found in Psalms cxxv., cxxvi., cxxvii., cxxix.

[3] "There is no more reason to suppose that this refers to 'Elijah' in person than to imagine from Hos. iii. 5; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Jer. xxx. 9, &c., that David himself is to come in the flesh" (Bishop Ellicott's Commentary v., p. 609).

heal the domestic disunion which sin had brought upon them.[1] This must be done to avert the ban with which God must otherwise smite the land. Thus the last prophet of the old dispensation closes with the promise of the forerunner of the new.

It is remarkable that like Isaiah, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes, the book ends with words of sternness and ill omen. Many a Christian reader must have been a little shocked to find that the last word in his Old Testament is "curse." The word, however, is technical. It is "the *cherem*," or ban; and the ban alluded to, in case of hardened impenitence, is exactly that which has fallen for ages upon Palestine—the ban of desolation. The Jews, who are extremely sensitive in the matter of omens, get over the difficulty in these three books by always *repeating* after the last verse the last but one, and so ending Isaiah and Ecclesiastes with the word Jehovah.

"Malachi is like a late evening which brings a long day to a close, but he is also like a morning dawn which brings with it the promise of a new and more glorious day." And it is very significant that as in the New Testament Christ is heralded by the great forerunner who in all the circumstances of his life and story so closely recalled Elijah, and who evidently had in his mind the words of Malachi as well as of Isaiah;[2] so Christ was attended on the Mount of Transfiguration by Moses and Elijah, and the law of Moses and the mission of Elijah are the two most prominent thoughts in the last of the prophets. The figure of the herald in the wilderness, of the great lawgiver, of the mighty prophet, cast their dim shadows upon the page of Malachi; they shine forth in all their majesty in the pages of the Gospels under the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in His wings.

[1] This is the *primâ facie* meaning; but perhaps Keil is right in interpreting it to mean that the hearts of the degenerate descendants of the Israelites would be better attuned to the hearts of their forefathers the patriarchs. It has been noticed that Malachi is decidedly a *laudator temporis acti*.

[2] Comp. Matt. iii. 11, 12; xi. 3, 10, 14, with Mal. iii. 1; iv. 5.

CHAPTER XXII.

JONAH.

Peculiarity of the book—Its late origin—Its purpose and lessons—Difficulties—Arguments of those who defend its genuineness—i. Defence of the miraculous—ii. Historical parallels—iii. Reference of our Lord.

THE Book of Jonah differs from every other book in the prophetic canon. It is not a prophecy; nor is it written purely from the *historic* point of view, like the stories of Elijah and Elisha. It is, as Stähelin says, "the history of a prophecy," but perhaps it is neither meant to be historical nor prophetic, but a moral and spiritual lesson. The prophet appears upon the stage and disappears with equal suddenness. Nothing is told us about his origin or previous history, and nothing about his ultimate fortunes. It is a book written exclusively for the purpose of teaching great moral and spiritual lessons. Hence it breaks off with startling abruptness. When the writer had accomplished his purpose he felt no necessity to tell us anything more. The book does not profess to have been written by Jonah himself. The prophet is always spoken of in the third person, and Nineveh (iii. 3) is alluded to as no longer existent. The book contains many Aramaic forms which accord with the growing conviction that it was the work of a writer who lived after the Exile, or at any rate towards its close. This is the view of Kleinert, Ewald, Bleek, Nöldeke, Schrader, Reuss, and v. Orelli. Hitzig places it as late as the Maccabean age. The prayer of Jonah may be, and probably is, of older origin, but the attempts to regard the book as one of the eighth century before Christ, and the explanation of its Aramaic forms as peculiarities of the dialect of North Palestine, find an ever-decreasing number of followers.

Many different views have been adopted as to the purpose of the book. Hitzig and others suppose that it was written with an *apologetic* purpose. Many of the older prophecies had

remained unfulfilled, and the writer wished to show that God's menaces were always to be regarded as conditional. It would then be the author's object to set forth a correct view of the functions of the true prophet, which, as Von Hofmann defines them, were: 1. To deliver God's message whatever it was; 2. To be absolutely fearless, even in peril of death; 3. Not to trouble himself about the fulfilment of his prophecies, but to leave them absolutely in the hands of God.

No doubt the book contains such lessons—but it also contains other and deeper lessons, and from the two closing verses we should rather infer that its main purport was to overthrow the narrow conceit of Jewish particularism, and to reveal God's true relations of merciful Fatherhood towards the Gentile world. This was the view of Rabbi Kimchi, and it has been adopted by many eminent critics, and among others by De Wette, Delitzsch, and Bleek. Certainly this is one of the main truths which the book develops, and it could have had no worthier or more original aim, especially amid the ever-narrowing exclusiveness of the age to which it probably belongs.

The strange character of the story and its immense difficulties and improbabilities of every kind have led to the wildest hypotheses about it. Renan regards it as a stinging satire against the prophets. Gesenius, De Wette, Knobel, and others, try, very unsuccessfully, to trace the groundwork of it to some Greek myth.[1] As far back as the Middle Ages so great a commentator as Abarbanel thought that the story of the fish represented a dream. Others have supposed that the fish was the sign of a vessel which rescued the drowning prophet.[2] Commentators are yet divided between the belief that it is an historic narrative of events, real, though stupendously miraculous; and the opinion that it is a late but interesting specimen of the Jewish Hagada—a legend attached to the name of the historic Jonah, and worked out into spiritual lessons. They find insuperable historic difficulties in the account of the mission to Nineveh, and the repentance of that vast and cruel capital, and its bloodstained despots; and many other difficulties

[1] This unfortunate and most improbable view was first suggested by F. C. Baur (Ilgen's "Zeitschz," vii. 201. 1837).

[2] Clericus, "Bibl.," xx. 2, 459. Many strange opinions are enumerated in Friedrichsen's "Krit. Uebersicht d. Verschied. Aussichten d. Buch Jona." 1841.

which lead one commentator to say that "the marks of a story are as patent in the Book of Jonah as in any of the thousand and one tales of the Arabian Nights." But even if the book be one of the Jewish *Hagadoth*, the intrinsic worth of the noble spiritual lessons which it was designed to teach remains entirely unimpaired. We value the Book of Job, although in that book also, we see, not a history, but a free development of legends and traditions.

The commentators who maintain the authentic character of the story mainly insist on three sets of considerations.

1. They argue that an event is not to be set aside because it is supernatural.

That plea will be conceded by every Christian; but the insistence upon it involves an entire mistake as to the point at issue. Some, no doubt, repudiate the historic character of the book because of the stupendous portents which it narrates, and to them it may be of use to insist on the arguments which justify our belief in the occurrence of miracles. But multitudes of Christian scholars who refuse to accept the book literally are not actuated by any *a priori* objections to the credibility of miracles, but by the failure to see any adequate evidence, or indeed any real evidence at all, for those which are here recorded.[1] To brand this as "unbelief," and to stigmatise it as criminal, is a method of controversy adopted in many English commentaries. But it is nevertheless unfair and unwarrantable. A brighter love of truth, and a deeper belief may be evinced by the rejection of narratives which do not appear to be sufficiently authenticated than by their blind, indiscriminate, and uncritical acceptance. The reasons which scholars have adduced for regarding the Book of Jonah as a late product of Jewish literature belonging to the same general cycle as some of those which are preserved in the Apocrypha, are strong reasons, and they have been sufficiently valid to convince many of the most devout scholars both in Germany and in England.[2] To assail them as infidels or unbelievers is to use a coarse, blunt, and rusty weapon,

[1] This entirely false issue on which Dr. Pusey and others insist is as old as St. Augustine, in whom it is more excusable. Aug., "Ep.," cii., and Cyril of Alexandria ("Comm. in Jonam").

[2] It is strange that any one should refer to Jer. li., Tob. xiv. 8, or Josephus, "Ant.," ix. 10, § 2, as proofs that the whole story is literally true.

which in these days, at any rate, will only betray the weakness of the cause of those who wield it.

2. The defenders of the historical character of the book bring as many parallels as they can find to illustrate the incidents narrated. They try to show that there is nothing so very surprising in the fact of Jonah's being swallowed by a fish, and cast upon the shore. But if the story of Jonah be literally true, it involves miracles of the most decisive and absolute character, and nothing is gained by the attempt to minimise them, or explain them away. On the other hand, it has been shown with entire success that many minor details and incidents which might seem surprising, such as the commanded mourning of beasts as well as men (comp. Hdt. ix. 24), are quite in accordance with probability. Nor—apart from the difficulty of historic identification—is there anything inherently impossible in the effect attributed to Jonah's preaching. "It was not necessary to the effect of Jonah's preaching," says Mr. Layard, "that he should be of the religion of the people of Nineveh. I have known a Christian priest frighten a whole Mussulman town to tears and repentance by publicly proclaiming that he had received a Divine mission to announce a coming earthquake or plague."[1]

3. They quote the allusions of our Lord to "the sign of the Prophet Jonah," as a decisive proof that the story must be real. In Matt. xii. 39, 40, this reference is explained: "for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the fish's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." In the two other Gospel references, "the sign of the Prophet Jonah" (Matt. xvi. 4; Luke xi. 29), is the repentance of the Ninevites at Jonah's preaching, and many critics have consequently inferred that Matt. xii. 40 is an explanation added afterwards by one who did not understand the special bearing of our Lord's allusion. There is perhaps some ground for such a conjecture in the very exceptional difficulties of the clause, "so shall the Son of man be three days and *three nights* in the *heart of the earth*." They may be susceptible of reasonable explanation, but they are unlike any other reference in the New Testament to the period of our Lord's entombment. Now, if it could be shown that Jesus intended by these words to stamp the story as literally true, every Christian would at once,

[1] "Nineveh and Babylon," 632.

and as a matter of course, accept it. But this is an assumption; and it is (again) a bad form of uncharitableness to adopt the tone of those commentators who charge their opponents with setting aside the authority of Christ. Seeing that our Lord so largely adopted the method of moral allegory in His own parabolic teaching—seeing that it was part of His habit to embody truth in tales which were not literal facts, but were only told to fix deep spiritual lessons in the minds of the hearers—nothing is more possible than that He should have pointed to the deep symbolism of an Old Testament parable without at all intending to imply that the facts literally happened. "It does not necessarily follow," says the Dean of Wells in his commentary on St. Matthew, "that this use of the history as a prophetic symbol of the Resurrection requires us to accept it in the very letter of its details. It was enough for the purposes of the illustration that it was familiar and generally accepted." Even a commentator so learned, conservative, and reverent as v. Orelli admits that the reality of Jonah's preservation in the belly of the fish is not to be decisively adduced from our Lord's allusion to it as a sign of the Resurrection.[1]

In any case we shall be turning this precious little book to the purpose most consonant with our Lord's own allusions to it if we try to learn the spiritual truths which it sets forth with incomparable vividness and precision. Whether the material in the writer's hands was legendary or not, he used it as the medium for setting forth truths which had been revealed to his own heart. "We may gather from it," says Ewald, "what the true prophet of Jahveh ought *not* to be; we may prove from it that peoples of all callings and religions are equal before the Divine love and forgiveness, though neither the latter nor the former truth is presented by the author as the primary principle of his narrative." He classes the author among the prophetic writers of legend who abounded in the latest stages of Jewish literature. Like many critics, he holds that the hymn or prayer of Jonah has but little bearing on the position in which he was supposed to be. It contains no allu-

[1] The same may be said of Dr. Otto Zöckler. In his "Hand. d. Theol. Wissenshaften," p. 149, he says that the book is didactic not historic, and adds with true candour, "Die Notwendigkeit den Inhalt für buchstäblich wahre Geschichte zu halten kann auch durch, Matt. xii. 39, nicht begründet werden."

sion to the sea-monster, and we may suppose that it was an insertion derived from an earlier age.[1] Whatever may be thought of this question—and one of the many conjectures about the book is that it was suggested by the hymn—there can be little doubt that the main part of the book is of homogeneous authorship. Köhler, indeed, has tried to prove that the passages i. 8, ii. 1–9, iii. 9, iv. 1–4, are interpolations which were added as *purpurei panni* to the original story, but he does not at all succeed in proving his case.[2]

"So obvious," says Kalisch, "is the main idea which pervades the book and stamps it with the character of perfect unity—the idea of the wonderful power of true repentance—that it seems surprising that this point should ever have been mistaken, and should have called forth the most varied and most fanciful views." But the book is many-sided in character, and though the blessedness of penitence is prominently illustrated, I shall try to show that other lessons are no less powerfully enforced.

The Book of Jonah is perhaps more derided than any other in the whole Bible. Scoffed at by the sceptic now, as it was by the pagans in old days, often a source of perplexity to the believer, of uncertain date, of disputed interpretation, it is yet a book of the highest value, and from its plain narrative we may learn lessons of a Divine wisdom.

The prophet Jonah, son of Amittai, lived in the eighth century before Christ, and was born at a village named Gath-Hepher, in the tribe of Zebulon, about an hour's walk north of Nazareth. He was therefore "a prophet out of Galilee." Jewish legend said that he was the son of the widow of Sarepta, whom Elijah had restored to life;[3] and also that he was the youth whom

[1] See "Dichter d. Alt. Bundes," i. 155-157.

[2] See K. Köhler, "Prophetismus der Hebräer." Among the many monographs on Jonah we may refer to that by Kalisch ("Bible Studies," ii.), who regards it as an ethical romance founded on fact. Professor Cheyne has written a paper on it—"Jonah, a Study in Jewish Folk-lore and Religion" (*Mod. Rev.*, 1877)—and also in the last edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica." Kuenen's views are given in the "Religion of Israel," ii, 227-244, and "Hist. Krit. Onderz.," ii. 412 ff. He alludes to the book as "a narrative which stands altogether by itself among the writings of the prophets, or indeed in the Old Testament," in "Prophets of Israel," p. 373.

[3] See Jer., "Præf. in Jonam." The story is based on the word *emeth* (1 Kings xvii. 24), and the name *Amittai*, "true."

Elisha had sent to anoint Jehu, king of Israel. The stories hardly pretend to be true, but they mark the age in which the historic Jonah lived. All that we know further about him is that he had prophesied the victories which flung a delusive gleam of prosperity over the reign of Jeroboam II. To this prophet came the word of the Lord bidding him leave his home in Israel, leave the countrymen to whom he had been preaching all his life, and go to Nineveh and cry against it. That he ought to obey this Divine calling was a conviction which came upon him with overwhelming force. But the duty was so terrible, it involved such a vast self-sacrifice, that he fled from its fulfilment. In Israel, in any country, the true prophet has enough of hardship, of misrepresentation, of religious hatred, and of irreligious hatred to bear; but what were the self-denials of a witness for God in Samaria compared with those which he would have to face in going alone to the mighty capital of Assyria, the dwelling-place (as Nahum calls it) of the lion, and the feeding-place of the young lion? The hair-garment and leathern girdle of the prophet were known in Israel, and if they were not honoured, they were at least tolerated; but what would be the attentions accorded to the wandering Jewish stranger in the bloody and luxurious city of the heathen? What sort of reception could he expect from kings of the type of Sargon or Assurbanipal? Jonah, like many men, fled headlong from what he knew to be his duty. Anything seemed to be more tolerable than that.

God sent him eastward to Assyria. He was determined to fly westward, along the whole Mediterranean, to Spain. From the hills of Zebulon he hurried down to the port of Joppa, hastened on board ship, paid the fare, and set sail "to go to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." But he was very speedily taught that he could no more get rid of the presence of the Lord than he could get rid of his own being. He had to learn the lesson which the Psalmist learnt: "Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit, and whither shall I go then from Thy presence?"

His folly soon became apparent. God cast forth a great wind upon the sea; the ship was in danger of being swamped. The heathen mariners, in their terror, flung the cargo overboard, and cried to their gods. But, amid all the terror and confusion, Jonah was fast asleep. His flight from duty had

been long and precipitous, and in the lethargy of his conscience he slept heavily.

Happily, however, his conscience, though slumbering, was not dead when "the sea of calamity met the sea of crime." The voice which he had vainly tried to silence spoke to him in the voice of the shipmaster: "What aileth thee, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, that we perish not." He saw, as the heathen sailors also saw, that this was no common storm. The ship was the court of justice, the sailors the judges, the winds the executioner; the accuser was the angry sea. They cast lots to find the criminal; the lot fell on Jonah. The mariners crowded round him. "Tell us," they said, "why is this? What is thy business? Whence art thou? Of what people?" Every question came home to the guilty fugitive. "I who am in this heathen ship; I whose business is at Nineveh; I whom God has a right to command; I at whom this storm is bent—I am a Hebrew." Well might they be afraid, and say, "Why hast thou done this? Thou, who fearest God, who made the sea, to fly over the sea! *We* are heathens, but that *thou* shouldst do this!"

For a time Jonah rose in his fall. He knew that his guilt was imperilling the lives of others. He bade them cast him into the tempestuous sea. This phase of the story offers an instructive contrast to that narrated in the Gospels of the calm sleep of Christ amid the wind and storm on the Sea of Galilee. Where guilt is, there is peril; where Christ is, there is safety. Where guilt is, the soul will be weighed down to the depths; where Christ is, we can walk upon the billows. Where a Jonah is on board, the gallant ship will but sink like lead in the mighty waters; where Christ is, a boat of wattled reeds may outlive the storm.

It is a remarkable fact that throughout the Book of Jonah the heathen are represented in a light far more favourable than the Jew. "The mariners were spared; the prophet was cast forth as guilty. The Ninevites were forgiven; the prophet is rebuked." These heathen sailors were unwilling to cast Jonah into the sea. They rowed hard—in the picturesque language of the original they "dug the sea;" but they could not bring the ship to land. The sea wrought and was tempestuous against them. Then, seeing that all else was vain, they cried: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, we beseech Thee, let us not perish for

this man's life; let us not be held responsible for having shed innocent blood. We are but doing as Thou hast willed." So they bowed to the dreadful necessity. Without violence they lifted up the willing, conscience-stricken victim and cast him forth into the sea; and then, like a hungry monster which had received its prey, the sea was still. The ship sailed on with its awestruck and thankful crew.

Jonah was saved from his fearful jeopardy. Two verses exhaust all that the story has to tell of the method of his deliverance. It says that God had prepared a great fish which swallowed Jonah, and at God's bidding cast him forth on land. It is on this single incident that attention has concentrated itself in volumes of speculation. Those who have accepted it as a miracle have anathematized those who looked on it as a moral figure, and those who have regarded it as a moral figure have derided those who believe it to be a miracle. Both sets of reasoners might have learnt from this remarkable book lessons of the love of God for man, and of the tolerance due from men to one another, which would have saved them from all this mutual embitterment. It is, at any rate, clear that the Book of Jonah was not written in order that we might "pore over the whale, and forget God;" might expatiate on the portent which it touches so slightly, and ignore the deep lessons which are the true essence of the book. The question is one for linguistic and historic criticism finally to decide.

Jonah was delivered by a great deliverance from the raging waves, and he thanked God. In his prayer, which fills the second chapter, he dwells on his escape, but not at all on the manner of it; he pours out his heart to God, who had saved him from the grave of waters when he seemed to be carried down to the monstrous bottoms of the world, but makes no allusion whatever to that mode of his deliverance which has concentrated and absorbed the whole attention of controversial disputants. But in spite of this great rescue, the rest of his story still reveals the selfishness, the imperfection, the sinful littleness of his natural character. Again the word of the Lord bade him go to Nineveh and deliver the message entrusted to him. He obeyed. Nineveh was the London of the ancient world; and such districts of streets and parks and gardens lay in it, that it was sixty miles in circumference. Through this vast city he passed—a day's journey;

and ever as he passed he delivered his sole, his unconditional, his terrible message of five Hebrew words: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh overthrown." From sunrise to sunset the crowded streets, the vast spaces full of cruel palaces, with their idolatrous figures of winged bulls and frescoes of lion-hunts and conquests, saw with astonishment the rude figure in its one rough garment of hair-cloth; heard with terror the oft-repeated, unvarying cry, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh overthrown." The message has been declared to be impossibly simple; but Eastern readers would appreciate the awful impressiveness of its simplicity and the sublime audacity of the stranger with his ringing, monotonous message. It was like the "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," of John the Baptist; it was like the cry of Jesus, son of Hanan, the unlettered rustic, for four years through Jerusalem before its siege, shouting, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem." Jerusalem did not repent, because her day was come; but Nineveh for a time repented, and was reprieved, because the cup of her iniquity was not yet full. The East is deeply susceptible of religious impressions. The missionary Dr. Woolf rode in the full robes of a clergyman, reading aloud from his Bible, into the streets of Bokhara unmolested through the midst of an intensely fanatical and reckless population. Even in our own colder regions a deep impression was produced by the leather garment and rude speech of George Fox, the Quaker; and the wild Kingswood colliers, a savage and semi-heathen race, wept white traces on their black cheeks at the preaching of George Whitefield. Nineveh repented as England repented in part at the early preaching of methodists and evangelicals. The wild cry thrilled with its tone of terror into the heart even of the king and his nobles. It produced a panic, a revival, if not a conversion. The whole people is bidden to fast and pray and repent; the very animals are included, Eastern-fashion, in the general humiliation; and that one Lent of deep penitence saved six hundred thousand souls. It is, of course, implied that Jonah was seconded by a preacher of infinite power—the preaching of conscience, the "voice of God in the heart of man." In the hour of terror the slumbering conscience of nations also is awakened to the sense of their crimes. Just as on the day when the awful news came to Athens of the utter defeat and destruction of her fleet at Ægospotami, the cry of

woe began at the Piræus and ran down the long walls to the city, and on that night "not a man slept," not only from sorrow for the past or terror for the future, but also from remorse, because they felt that what was coming upon them was a retribution for their own faithless and atrocious cruelty to Ægina, to Melos, and to Scione;—so at the cry of Jonah, which threatened them with retributive overthrow, Nineveh was stirred to the heart, and repented—repented and was saved. The conditionality of all God's threatenings—the truth that the menaced penalties may always be averted by timely penitence—was perhaps meant to be one main lesson of the book. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation," saith the Lord, "to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." In this respect it is with kingdoms as it is with individual men.

There is an astonishing boldness, as well as a deep moral insight, in the following verses. "God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." With unflinching plainness the prophet is set before us in a light so entirely odious that there is almost an excuse for the critics who have seen in the book a satire on some of the sterner phases of prophetism. It is indeed a revolting thought that a prophet should be very angry because God was merciful; that he should peevishly complain against God, and wish himself dead, because God does not upheave Nineveh with His earthquakes or smite it with His thunderbolts to save his petty personal credit. He had thanked God for his own preservation, but he is sore displeased that these six hundred thousand should be spared. It might seem to be an inconceivable perversity of pitiless religious hatred, but it is very common. It is the spirit of Job's three friends, torturing Job with the petty orthodoxies which made God so angry. It is the spirit of the Jews in their Talmud, cursing and execrating the Gentiles. It is the spirit of the elder brother, furious and sullen because his father has forgiven the prodigal. It is the spirit of the Pharisees, dragging in the adulteress, and telling Jesus that such creatures should be stoned. It is the spirit of Simon saying that Jesus cannot be a prophet, because He has suffered the penitent harlot to weep upon His feet. It is the spirit of the

souls under the altar, crying, "How long, O Lord, how long?" impatient at the longsuffering that delayeth vengeance on their foes. It is the dark, sinister, selfish side of even great religious teachers. It is the spirit of envy, hatred, and intolerance which finds vent in malice and bitterness, and is the curse alike of the Church and of the world.

But the story goes on to show us that God is merciful to Jonah no less than to Nineveh, to the hard Pharisee as well as to the trembling sinners. He did not spurn Jonah away because of his petty and merciless pride. He only spoke to him in the still small voice of conscience, "Doest thou well to be angry?" But Jonah went out of the city, and made himself a booth, and sat under it, not believing that God could really be so gracious, or that He could have bade him speak a threat which yet in His mercy He repealed. He had expected to see men, women, children, cattle, all perishing, all the city overthrown; but they all lived, and there the city still glittered before his eyes. He had *expected* it—had he *hoped* for it? Yes, it is distinctly implied that he *had* hoped for it. "Better that Nineveh perish rather than that I should be proved to have been mistaken."

No more powerful warning to the merciless spirit of intolerant Pharisaism was ever penned than that which is involved in the spectacle here so vividly presented to us of this proud, hard prophet sitting in moody gloom, half mad with vexation, because God was more merciful than he. And the tone and temper which Jonah then displayed received again and again the stern rebuke of Christ. "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" is the heart-searching question addressed to the labourer who thinks that he has been personally injured because a later labourer wins the same reward.

And here we may once more notice a striking contrast. Jesus wept over doomed Jerusalem; Jonah was very angry because of Nineveh reprieved.

But once more God dealt tenderly with this petty, loveless nature. The sun was hot, and He gave him shade under the broad green leaves of the quick-growing palmchrist; and Jonah was glad. Next morning a worm had gnawed at the plant's root, and it withered. The simoon breathed its hot flame, and the sun smote on the prophet's head; and once more he pettishly wished himself dead. Again came the gentle question, "Doest thou well to be angry?" Again the fretful

answer, "I do well to be angry even to death." It is a marvellously vivid presentation of a poor peevish nature, with its physical discomfort and its fierce religionism, its cherished hatred and its personal pique—equally miserable over the saved city and the withered gourd—little in its disappointments and base in its hopes.

It will be seen, then, even from this brief sketch, that the Book of Jonah is a remarkable and beautiful book, full of large lessons of toleration, of pity, of the impossibility of flying from God, of the merciful deliverances of God, of the just retributions of God, of the infinite love of God, of man's little hatreds shamed into fatuity, dwarfed into insignificance, by God's abounding tenderness. It teaches us that no man can be to the nations a herald of God's righteousness who is not a herald also of His mercy; that God's righteousness is shown in making men righteous; that if they will submit to be made so, His end is accomplished; if they will resist, then His vengeance will go forth, not because He has forgotten mercy, but because that which is unmerciful and hard-hearted shall not possess the earth which He claims for His dominion. "O God," says the author of the Book of Wisdom, "the whole world is as a drop of morning dew. But Thou hast mercy upon all. . . . For Thou lovest all things that are, and abhorrest nothing that Thou hast made. . . . But Thou sparest all . . . for they are Thine, O Lord, Thou lover of souls."

CHIEF PROPHECIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS WHICH ARE MESSIANICALLY APPLIED, OR OTHERWISE REFERRED TO IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. xix. 10).

Hosea i. 10, ii. 23	Call of the Gentiles.	Rom. ix. 25; Matt. ix. 31
,, iii. 5	Return of Israel to David their king.	1 Pet. ii. 10
,, x. 8	Calling to the mountains and rocks.	Luke xxiii. 30
,, xi. 1	"Out of Egypt have I called My son."	Matt. ii. 15
,, vi. 2	"On the third day."	1 Cor. xv. 4
,, xiii. 14	Death and Sheol.	1 Cor. xv. 55
Joel ii. 28, 29	The outpouring of the Spirit.	Acts ii. 17
,, ii. 32	Call of the Gentiles.	Rom. x. 13
Amos ix. 11	Restoration of Tabernacle of David.	Acts xv. 16
Obadiah, ver. 21	Jehovah's kingdom.	Luke i. 33
Jonah	The signs of the prophet.	Matt. xvi. 4; Luke xi. 30
,,	The typical resurrection.	Matt. xii. 40
,,	The *καιροὶ ἐθνῶν*.	Luke xxi. 24
Micah ii. 12, 13	Messiah's kingdom.	Rom. vii. 26
,, v. 1, 2	Bethlehem-Ephratah.	Matt. ii. 5,6; John vii. 42
,, iv. 8	Migdal-Eder.	Luke xxiv. 47
,, vii. 6	Variance in homes.	Matt. x. 35; Mark xiii. 12
Nahum i. 7	"The Lord knoweth them that are His."	2 Tim. ii. 19
Habakkuk ii. 3, 4	*ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἥξει*. LXX.	Heb. x. 37
,, ii. 4	"The just shall live by faith."	Gal. iii. 11.
Zephaniah iii. 15	The king of Israel.	John i. 49
Haggai ii. 6–9	The shaking of the nations.	Heb. xii. 26
,, 21–23	Promise to Zerubbabel.	Luke iii. 27

Zechariah	iii. 8	The Branch.	Luke i. 78
,,	vi. 13	The crowned Priest.	Phil. ii. 5–11 ; Heb. vi. 20
,,	viii. 23	Final glory of Israel.	Acts xiii. 47, 48
,,	ix. 9	The lowly King.	Matt. xxi. 4, 5 ; John xii. 14–16
,,	xi. 12, 13	Betrayal of the Good Shepherd.	Matt. xxvii. 9
,,	xii. 3	The stone of stumbling.	Matt. xxi. 44
,,	xii. 8	Exaltation of David's house.	Luke ii. 4.
,,	xii. 10	Men shall look unto Me, whom they have pierced.	John xix. 37
,,	xiii. 1	The cleansing fountain.	Rev. i. 5
,,	xiii. 7–9	Fate of the Shepherd of the sheep.	Matt. xxvi. 31 ; Mark xiv. 27
,,	xiv. 9	Jehovah's kingdom.	John x. 16 ; Rev. xi. 15
,,	xiv. 20	Universal holiness.	Rev. xxi. 27
Malachi	i. 11	The universal offering.	Rev. viii. 3, 4
,,	iii. 1	The messenger of the covenant.	Mark i. 2 ; Luke i. 76, vii. 27
,,	iv. 1–3	The Day of the Lord.	Matt. iii. 12 ; Rev. i. 7
,,	iv. 5	Elijah the prophet.	Matt. xi. 14, xvii. 12 ; Mark ix. 13 ; Luke i. 17

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